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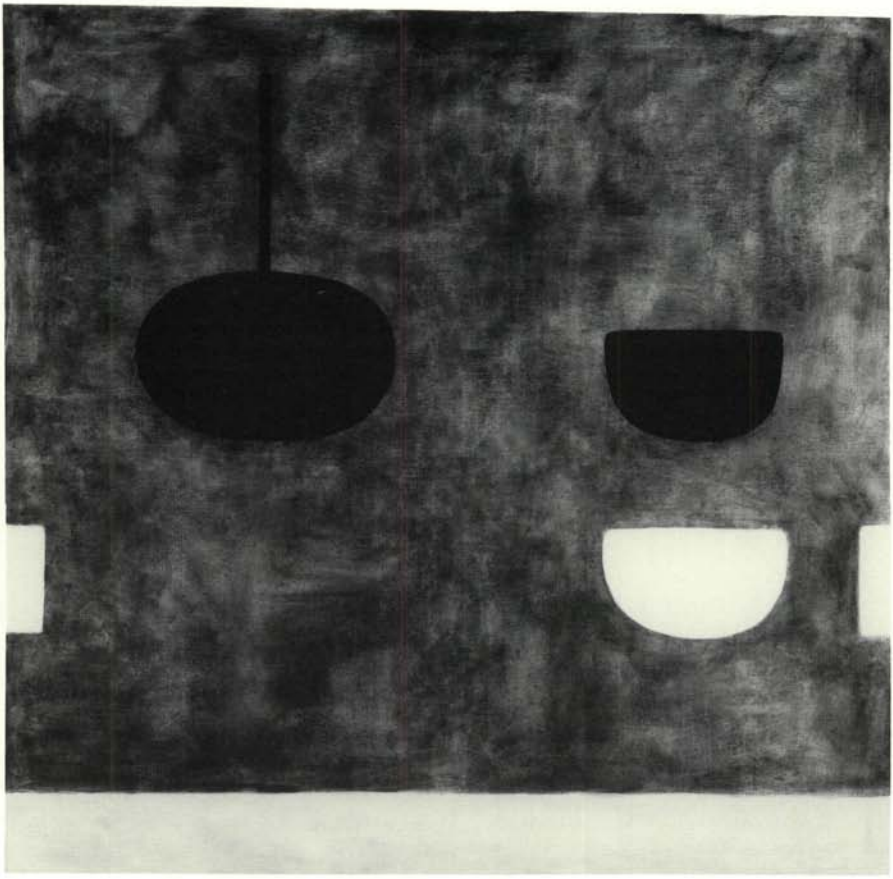

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Editor's Note: In Cynthia Ozick's essay, 'Of Christian Heroism" (PR 1/1992), the last sentence on page 46 should have read: "But taking human beings 'collectively' is precisely what we are obliged not to do."

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Say Cheese (Random House), a novel, is the most recent book by the exiled Russian writer **VASSILY AKSYONOV**. . . HarperCollins will bring out **DORIS LESSING**'s new collection of stories, *The Real Thing*. . . . **JOHN BAYLEY**'s essay in this issue will be published as the introduction to the Everyman's Library edition of *The Captain's Daughter and Other Stories* (Knopf). . . *Anti-Semitism. The Longest Hatred* by **ROBERT S. WISTRICH** is due out this summer from Pantheon. . . . **THOMAS NOWOTNY,** former Consul-General, Austria, now lives in Vienna. . . . **ISE BALÁSZ-RÁKÓCZY** is the pen name of **STEPHEN KURTZ,** a psychotherapist who lives in New York City. . . . **EUGENIO MONTALE** (1896-1982) was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1975. . . . **DAVID FERRY**'s metrical version of *The Gilgamesh Epic* will be published in May (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). . . . *Last Poems* (North Point Press) and *Poems* (Persea Books) by **PAUL CELAN** (1920-1970) have recently appeared in translation. . . . Bruce Berlind's volume of translated poems by **IMRÉ ORAVEZ**, *The Fishing Man*, will be published this year. . . . Translations of the work of **JÁNOS PILINSKY** (1921-1981) have appeared as *Selected Poems* and *Crater*. . . . Pedernal Press will bring out **TOMAŽ ŠALAMUN**'s collection of poems in translation, *The Shepherd, the Hunter*, this fall. . . . *Clay and Star*, an anthology of contemporary Bulgarian poetry in translation, edited by **GEORGI BELEV** and Lisa Sapinkopf, will be brought out this summer (Milkweed Editions). . . . **BOYDAN BOYCHUK's** *Poems: Selected and Next to Last* have appeared in translation . . . **GEORGE STADE** is Professor of English at Columbia University. . . . **PEARL K. BELL** is a writer who lives in Cambridge, MA. . . . **DARIUSZ TOLCZYK** teaches in the Slavic Languages and Literature Department at Harvard University. . . . **DAVID SIDORSKY** is Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University. . . . **DAVID A. BELL**, whose book, *Lawyers and Citizens: The Rise of a Political Elite in Early Modern France*, will appear from Oxford U. Press, is Assistant Professor of History at Yale University. . . . **EDITH KURZWEIL**'s new book on feminists and Freudians will be published by Westview Press. . . . **MARJORIE WELISH** has a new book of poems, *The Windows Flew Open* (Burning Deck Books).

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COMMENT

Kafka and Orwell: Footnotes Frederick Karl's biography of Kafka, *Franz Kafka: Representative Man*, like Michael Selden's of Orwell, gives the fullest account of Kafka's day-to-day life. It also presents in greater detail the social milieu into which Kafka was born, and of which Karl claims Kafka was a representative man. In reflecting his environment, says Karl, Kafka stood out as the great modernist. The social background, according to Karl, concisted of a corrupt and dying Austro-Hungarian Empire, a confusion and competition of languages, a Jewry torn in its identity and allegiances, a German literary tradition vying with a native Czech tradition.

This is all true. But the extent to which it explains Kafka's actual writing is questionable. Does it really explain the very unique and idiosyncratic, dream-like transformation of Kafka's personal experience – his suffering, fantasies, obsessions – into literature? After all, the other writers of the period lived in the same social situation. Yet they produced very different works. No doubt, Kafka did absorb some of the contradictions and conflicts around him. But this is a truism. Karl does not fail to mention the personal factors in Kafka's fiction, though he does not emphasize sufficiently their determining role in the conversion of Kafka's fixations into stories and novels. For example, Kafka's depiction of a bureaucratic world stems more from his experience when he was employed by the Workers' Accident Insurance Insititute and even more from his sense of the family as a bureaucracy ruled by the father, than it does from the bureaucratic structure of the society around him. Kafka's feelings about religion, and Kafka's own ideas about authority, particularly absolute authority, in his relation to his father, were transposed into the hierarchies and absolutes of the world of *The Trial* and *The Castle*. So, too, his portraits of women emerge from his feelings about his mother and his sisters. Kafka has been said to offer a preview of totalitarianism in his novels, yet it is not the totalitarian trends in the social world around him that he fictionalized, but the suffocating sense of his own life in interaction with his father, and in the crippling disorders of his own existence.

True enough, Kafka was a modern writer and a figure of his time. But it is more suggestive and illuminating to see him as a writer who turned his life into his work – work which both expressed and lessened his unbearable suffering.

In some things, Kafka's private vision resembled that of other people's public vision; in many things, it was peculiar to Kafka. In some re-

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spects, he was a representative man; in others he was distinctly unrepresentative. Generally, Kafka was an outstanding example of the idea, fairly common since Oscar Wilde, that literature expresses the smaller truths, the untruths, the warped vision, of a writer's experience more than it does the larger ones of society as a whole.

•

After the publication of the most recent, authorized biography of George Orwell by Michael Selden, *Orwell*, there's probably little left to debate about his life. One matter, however, about his political beliefs, still remains unresolved. Was he a socialist? If so, what kind of socialist? A related question is what would his politics be if he were alive today – after the demise of socialism in the former Soviet Union.

One reason why these questions are unresolved has to do with the ambiguities of Orwell's stated political views and the ambiguity of the term "socialism" as it has been used by Orwell and his interpreters. Some conservatives claim Orwell today would be a conservative, perhaps a neoconservative. Others think he would be a socialist, but what kind of socialist is not clear. And a number of years ago, in the time of Vietnam, Mary McCarthy castigated Orwell for being excessively and obsessively anticommunist.

In any event, several things are clear. Orwell was definitely anticommunist: that is, he had no use for the Soviet Union or for the communist parties it supported. In Spain, for example, he was disgusted with the role of the communists in the civil war. It is also true that while he was against the kind of socialism in practice in the Soviet Union, he still called himself a socialist – though he was critical of the Socialist Party, that is, the Social Democrats of Europe.

But there is no doubt that Orwell used the word "socialism" loosely – as it is used loosely even today by many people who refer to themselves as socialists. Orwell did not mean what Marx meant: the expropriation of the private means of production and the complete overthrow of the existing system of democratic capitalism. He seemed to mean some kind of welfare state, given to some measure of care for the poor and the underprivileged, plus as much political and intellectual freedom as is possible in any stable society. He was opposed to wild, unregulated capitalism. Socialism seemed to be a code word for a decent society.

This was not a unique position at the time. Many people, including myself, were highly critical of the totalitarian society in the Soviet Union that described itself as socialist, and somewhat uneasy with the fashionable concept of socialism still hanging on to some leftist notions about creat-

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ing a better society, however vague were both the ends and the means. I remember being on a panel at a meeting a number of years ago, at which someone in the audience asked me whether I was a socialist. Instead of questioning the questioner about what was meant by socialism, I hesitantly and faintly said, "No." A panelist, a well-known writer, sitting next to me, whispered in a shocked voice, "What, you aren't a socialist?" Shamefacedly, betraying the fact that I had not broken with the ideological *zeitgeist*, with the political orthodoxies and programmatic idealism of the time, I said, "Yes, I'm a socialist."

I assume Orwell would have said the same thing. After all, Sidney Hook, like Orwell, one of the leaders in the intellectual struggle against communism, also said he was a socialist. But it was not the socialism of Marx or Lenin. For all of us, it was a symbolic terminology for our ideals and for our frustrations. But I think if Orwell were alive, he probably would have abandoned the label, as I have, because it is too confusing.

There is some corroboration of the portrayal I have drawn of Orwell's politics in a conversation I had with him. I saw Orwell in 1950 in London shortly before he died. To be sure, I didn't quiz him about his political views, but we talked for a long time, and I had the impression he regarded himself as a highly critical member of the liberal left. He struck me as what has been known as a liberal anticommunist. We must remember this was a long time ago, and though in many respects Orwell was ahead of his time, in others he was a man of his time.

W. P.

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VASSILY AKSYONOV

A Winged Endangered Species

During my adolescent years, I was obsessed with a desire to be like all the others, a happy-go-lucky young fellow with no problems, who speaks a street slang, plays sports and drinks beer. I resolutely rejected any oddities. I learned painstakingly to dodge the questions about my parents, who were in prison camps, and to hide my literary tastes; just not to reveal the presence of any. And so I did, until a certain age, when all of a sudden, I realized that all these attempts were futile and I would never be "like all the others"; with my parents, "the enemies of the people," with my half-Jewishness and finally with a simple fact, that I *am* a poet. By the time I turned twenty, I had perfectly developed the mentality of a pariah in Soviet society. A little bit later, I learned to be proud of that. Thus, step by step, I was approaching the status of a rebel and outcast; I considered myself an inner emigré until, to my complete surprise, I realized that I was not alone: the post-Stalin society had already formed a stereotype of the rebels and outcasts.

Contemporary society almost immediately forms a stereotype out of originality, a fashion out of alienation, a caste out of uncoordinated anarchists. Surprisingly, Russia didn't turn out to be spared from this phenomenon as soon as the Bolsheviks' oppressive regime began to wither. As a matter of fact, it commenced as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, when, along with Pushkin's and Lermontov's characters, Russia was visited by a Byronic type. What was prior to what in this phenomenon, the chicken or the egg, the literature or the life? By the way, from where has George Byron himself scooped up his inspiration? Somehow or other, having turned up as an example of extreme individualism, the Byronite in Russia vigorously multiplied himself to the extent of the guards' mutiny against the Emperor in December of 1825.

The defeat of the uprising and the hanging of the five leaders (three of them were poets) didn't extricate that vogueish type from Russian life. On the contrary, the events added a fashionable pallor to its young face, shaping up the clan of the so-called "superfluous men." Sometimes it is said about Russians that they're just the imitators of Western trends. It may be true, but in their imitation, they so very often go farther than the object of imitation does. Raskolnikov dreamed of imitating the ruthless conqueror, Napolean, and ended up setting up the Cheka-KGB.

Editor's Note: This essay was first presented as a talk at the Fifty-sixth World PEN Congress in Vienna, November 1991.

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In aesthetics, things take no less cardinal turn. Take, for example, the Russian futurists. Having borrowed a name from a distant Italian movement, the Russian artists of the beginning of the twentieth century had developed a powerful avant–garde Renaissance, which begat at least three great poets, Khlebnikov, Mayakovsky and Pasternak; at least three great painters, Kandinsky, Malevich and Chagall and also at least two great Igors, Stravinsky and Sikorski. As it is known, that movement was triggered by the notorious stimulus of the "slap in the face of public taste." The rebutting slap of the public taste wiped the futurist off the face of the Earth.

Forty years late, something akin to that was born on the West coast. The movement was named by a word with the Russian–Jewish suffix, "ik," beatniks. In some ways, Allen Ginsburg resembled the Burljuk brothers, although, as far as I know, he has never drawn birds and cats on his cheeks and never sported a monocle and top hat. The beatniks' text had never been as rich as those of the futurists', however, their original stimulus was the same: "a slap in the face of public taste." In other words, that was a movement of individualism; if so, it might be said of any movement. They didn't succeed in creating a revolution in the Arts – if they ever had such an idea – however, they substantially shook the pillars of society. It's interesting how society struck back. Unlike that in Russia, the riot of individualism was absorbed not by ideology, but by the market. The beatnik was not cut off and banned; on the contrary, he was promoted, multiplied, and transformed into a marketable item.

In general, the entire development of super–civilization is marked by the ever–increasing adaptation of the daring and romantic "ego" into the ranks of consumerism. Few people can withstand the temptation of turning into good merchandise. Many cannot withstand the temptation of turning into bad merchandise. The book world, and consequently literature, that last harbor of pure individualism, are also undergoing major changes. Then again, I'm going to talk on this subject somewhat later. First, let me recall my literary youth in the world which tried to transform literature into a mass ideological, rather than commercial action. It seems that only the Korean People's Democratic Republic managed to organize an ideal relationship between the writer and the state. The novels and the stories over there have been released without the authors' names. Thus, their nation–wide significance and all–people derivation have been emphasized.

Soviet literature failed to reach such perfection, though Stalin liked to talk about writers in plural. Those whom he singled out usually were reduced to a single common denominator. Once a party commissar complained of the low moral standards of Soviet writers: too much alcohol, and there are some cases of extra–marital affairs. The leader

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"Alas, for the time being, I don't have any other writers." The Soviet Union Communist Party, always loyal to Stalin's traditions, before each holiday addressed the Soviet writers with a slogan: "Soviet writers, strengthen your ties with life, create more profound characters from our remarkable contemporaries!

In 1960, I, a young author, for the first time entered the Writers' Union Building to see, first of all, a big slogan in the lobby: "Writers ar the faithful assistants of the Party!" One might have said: "Give up all your hopes, everybody who comes here!" However . . . one might have said that least of all I, a wolf cub of Kolyma's litter, should join this collective farm; however, I passionately dreamed of becoming a member of that union, a Soviet writer of the Sixties. It's hard to believe, but that union completely unified and, down to the slightest detail, controlled by the Party and the KGB, was in those years, perhaps, the only, so to speak, "nest of sedition," the only small pocket of resistance to the overwhelming bacchanal of totalitarianism. Established by Stalin in 1934 that union, immediately after Stalin's departure, started bubbling with sedition, to produce some ambivalence, against he grain of collective wisdom, literary works.

There was a guess: Stalin committed a serious mistake as he spared the authors' literature. A serious disproportion was created by the very presence of a group of literati, i.e., the individualists, in a completely collectivized society. Under all ideological regimentations, a writer, nonetheless, still worked alone. This means, at least hypothetically, that he remained susceptible to fits of extreme individualism known as "inspiration." He could be, and quite frequently was, a narcissist, nurturing his vain "ego." Not seldom did he want to be called a "master of minds" or even a "subtle stylist," instead of a "faithful assistant to the Party." Lonely writing and twenty volumes of the Encyclopedia behind his shoulders created some megalomaniacal proclivity to the throng of classics, rather than to the Central Committee's literary section. Sometimes he was even visited by the seditious idea of a perishable existence, and could be struck by the notion of futility, and could question the grandeur of the "Great Five–Year Plans."

Earlier than all the others, the writers started getting out of control. Not without reasons, Nikita Khrushchev believed that the 1956 Hungarian uprising was fomented by the members of the Pétofi Club. In 1963, brandishing the Bolshevik's fist, he shouted at us: "We won't let you make your own Pétofi Club! We'll wipe you off of the Earth!"

I've known a few writers who buried their new creations, literally dug the manuscripts into the planet Earth. Let us visually imagine the process of that sacrifice. A symphonical conclusion of the opus, the last touches of chords, the dialogues with the gods are dying away in the

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night. Then the author takes a metal box – in some cases, the round, flat movie–film boxes were used – puts his creation inside – the "unperishable stuff," as it was trendy to say in those times – and comes out to a grove with a shovel. The Milky Way glitters. There are no witnesses to the burial but the nightingales and fire–flies. Whey did he do so? For his personal safety? If so, why did he write that dangerous stuff? For posterity's enlightenment? Well, there is so little chance that posterity would dig in the right place. Lamentably little chance, alas. And only the purely metaphysical, sheer conceptualist aspect of the action is worth talking about.

"The goal of creativity is self–sacrifice, not hoopla, not success," wrote Boris Pasternak. Somehow he smuggled his novel to Italy. Either he, or Solzhenitsyn, or other lone rebels, with their extremely developed individualism, were somehow eager to bring "the message" to society, to burn the peoples' hearts with their word.

The breakup of Communism introduced a curious paradox to our writers' life. Our beloved, so fruitful and dependable device of sarcasm started fading, the familiar facets of a rebellious personality got somehow erased. We're going to come closer to this them as we're approaching the West; however, so far, we still have in sight the awkward, though heroic struggle between our "lonely hero" and the soft, strangling machine of the post–Stalin state. As a natural result of this struggle, the hero was elbowed out into emigration, no matter whether external or internal. Both sides in that fight were wrong. It seemed to the soft machine that if it would spit out that indigestible morsel, its limbs would stop entangling into meaningless knots, and all its peristalsis would obtain some other sense than that of the self–suffocating. Meantime, the hero regards himself as Laocoon and hopes that a breaking through the boa constrictor–like walls of the machine will salvage his personality.

And what has happened in reality, i. e., when the desired separation was obtained? The machine kept going on with its self–suffocating process, since this was its predestination from the beginning, and the hero was suddenly struck with the idea that his personality might be erased without having that struggle, that his muscles would wither and his spirit would languish without the enemy and therefore, in wild bursts of self–protection, he kept performing the same motions, stretching the same, now absent snake–monster. Time was required to make a stop, and to inhale and regard the new shores. And so, yours truly, eleven years ago, having exchanged a four–digit abbreviation with an overly rumbling consonant on the end for a three–digit one with an oblong and resounding, like an echo in the woods, vowel on the end, that is, having moved out of the USSR–R–R to the USA–A–A, looked around and asked myself: "Where am I?"

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Communism is just one name among many still unknown names of totalitarianism. Nothing yet has proved that totalitarianism cannot be rich, luxurious and even liberal, if we take for liberalism some notions and items the subjects of communism were deprived of. We cannot help but rule out some absolutely opposite arguments. A trip to modern Japan, for example, can give you food for imagining some traits of the future, rich and liberal totalitarianism.

Then again, it is not necessary to travel so far away if you would agree to focus your attention on modern art. I happened to say a few times that the West has implemented into life one of Lenin's major slogans, which has usually made the Soviet intellectuals furious. "Art belongs to the masses," said a leader of the world proleteriat. It goes without saying that he was cunning, as all Communists were cunning with their slogans. He certainly meant thoroughly–controlled masses, the masses with meticulously shaped–up tastes and demons. Hence, Art belonged not to the masses, but to a leading group of those masses, i. e., to the Party. In the West, that slogan lost its ambiguity and can be taken literally and seriously. Art belongs to the masses, because the masses, by no means the refined connoisseurs, pay for it in real cash.

Focusing our attention on the book world and contemporary literature, we cannot help but wince in fleeting consternation: how far they have advanced toward a new, still not completely sensed totalitarianism, and how seriously the creative person has bent under the pressure of commercial conformism. The notion of literary success is undergoing a process of serious distortion. Most successful books turn out to be poorly written, their dialogues look wooden, the metaphors – far–fetched, they show a bleak imagination, an absence of style and a tremendous presence of vulgar taste.

For some reasons, and probably due to these just–mentioned characteristics, these books demonstrate high sales figures and therefore, their authors, during the last conference of publishers in New York, were regarded as they "big writers"; meanwhile, those who sold less found themselves in the lists of "smaller writers." In the world where literary success is being shaped up by the sizes of advances, royalties and collateral contracts, worthless, insignificant books are becoming a serious production of a great industry, the cases of serious considerations and serious investments. A publisher's first priority today is to guess the sale. If it seems to him that he detected a green, "I'll take it" light in the eyes of the hypothetical buyer, he rushes straight ahead with virtually unlimited advances, investments and advertising expenses, pushing a book to its release, neglecting even regular editing, as was lately shown by an article in *The New Republic.*

Today in America, the intellectuals more and more often start dis-

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cussions over book production. It's high time to do so, if it's not too late. Having a bird's–eye view on the American book landscape, one might fall down lower than the level of tastes which dominates our presumably so refined society. One can argue, there is literature, and there is literature. There is a tremendous world of commercial hack–work, and there is a smaller world where dignity, independence and inspiration still dictate their laws, that is, a world of genuine literature. That's true, but unfortunately, these two world are not insulated from each other. Commercial literature cannot help affecting the world of artistry, meanwhile, the counter–traffic all but doesn't exist. Here lies the gist of our problem: *I,* as an artist, and *they* as my potential readers. The mass production of hack–work creates a new climate over the cultural fields. In fact, we face an enormous pollution of the entire Western cultural environment. A winged horse becomes a most endangered species.

Compared to other fields of art, literature is more susceptible to the temptation of producing cheap stuff. Unlike, say, painting, the final outcome of the literary process sees the light in numerous cheap, affordable copies. Under the conditions of the mass market, the cheapness of a single copy covers the entire literary landscape with a thin film of general cheapness. The cheapness and beastly seriousness of so–called "aggressive marketing cannot but beget gloom and dullness in the book world. I can't suppress a yawn at a display of the glossy, tacky jackets of the weekly "new releases." The tradition of the superlative "blurbs" on the back side of a jacket, all written in the same vein of gasping admiration cannot be considered anything but a dreary disgrace.

The consequences of this rather innocent business can be more serious than they may seem. The first thing which occurs to you is the literary criticism. Sometimes, it seems to me that the critic in the Western book world has almost completely lost his ability, as well as his desire to express his subjective views on the literary process. It cannot be ruled out that he reached the same level of, so to speak, "objectivity" which was given to his colleague of Socialist Realism's epoch. With an insignificant exception, literary criticism in America turns into an extension of that notorious "aggressive marketing." The readers don't care about the review's content, but they do care about its location in the pages of a magazine. Once, I was receiving congratulations all day long, for a review of my book was situated in an upper right corner of a page of *Publisher's Weekly.*

With regards to the palatal sensations of the critics, I should say that they are situated in a rather narrow spectrum from a sweet to a sour–sweet; there is no room for tinges of bitterness. An impartial observer would be struck by the absence of polemics and clashes between various literary groups. Then again, what literary groups am I talking about?

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They are no more. A bizarre, discouraging state of obesity and stagnation. I don't think the American critic has nothing to say in the first person, however, all our daily practice reduces that "first person" to the general consuming masses. We do not await from literary criticism either revelations, or scandals. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that the younger generations of writer show such feeble signs of life. It doesn't mean that the country ran dry and out of talent. I'm teaching within the framework of one of the countless programs of creative writing and each year see quite a few young fellows who could have challenged the literary establishment. Alas, after graduation, the young writers enter the world of colossal parochialism, stiff classifications, the nauseating world of "book production."

Then again, the Pleaides. They are still available. There ar e a few lavishly awarded "thinkers and poets," a handful of high–brow periodicals, the men of letters, claiming , and sometimes not without reason, the continuation of the great tradition. There are some university publishers who don't care much about "aggressive marketing." There are some remnants of literary bohemia in New York . . But of course, there are some . . . something . . . no, not all the sources exhausted! We would exclaim with a provincial pathos . . . there are still . . . Oh, yes . . it is very unlikely that everything would vanish once and for all . . . There are some lonely individuals, independent minds, free spirits who can take off from the ground, in other words, who still haven't lost the ability to get inspired. To conclude this spree of wishful thinking, shouldn't we exclaim: "There *is* an alternative world, it must exist in the consumers' society, if it even existed in a society ridden with consumption. Yes, it does exist, I should say, but outpouring bitterness, I won't hesitate to add that even here, in that conjectural world of the alternative, now and then we stumble upon some examples of he abuse and distortion of the personality in the name of an ideological group, or a theoretical clan.

A stereotype of genius is very well entrenched in a society where no one starting to read a long monotone opus stuffed with the names of the ancient gods has ever reached its end. With his ever–nascent theme of a perishable existence, our mythical mediocrity energetically ascends from one literary prize to another, as though over notches made in advance, until he reaches the supreme laurels, which already give him a chance to claim a seat amidst his characters, that is, gods. From now on, he reigns coining the banalities akin to that famous: "Love the book, a source of knowledge" He promotes his groupies, cuts off the skepticism and thus manifests an ideal example of transformation, the "I" into the "We," a triumph of the collective over the personality.

The collective consciousness today manifests itself not only in the above–mentioned mafia style, but also in a more developed, almost aca-

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demic fashion. Having crumbled down in the East, it resurrects again in the West, commercially in the book stores and movie studios, intellectually – in the last hangouts of free spirit, the university campuses. The research of some scholarly ideologues invites society to the verge of a new totalitarianism. The theories of so–called "de–elitization" and "deconstruction" establish a low mediocre level for the arts, vigorously cutting down the tops of everything which, one way or another, creates a variety of landscapes. In a bizarre mode, these academic doctrines play into the hands of the hacks who fill the drugstores' bookshelves. It's hard not to raise the question why some independent minds, those, hypothetically, boats of individualism, so willingly moor to the concrete docks of the stereotype. Perhaps it wouldn't be a mistake to say that we all, the members of the academic and literary communities of the West, including the splitters of the East, somehow or other, have been affected by the strange phenomenon of "left censorship," based on the notorious principles of "political correctness." As regards those now much–spoken–about theories of "anti–Westernism, multi–culturalism, sexism and Afro–centrism," their interpretations, sometimes in a paradoxical way, remind me of the notorious anti–cosmopolitan campaign which was carried out by the communist apparatchiks in the beginning of the fifties in the USSR.

For us, "the old Russian boys," with our so dearly–nurtured anarchic impulses, it's hard to be lured by that questionable stuff, insofar as we aren't to trust even a MacDonald's commercial.

Poor diagnosticians, we fail to define the genuine origin of the Self, i.e., of everybody's core, we fail to guess and divide the proportions of the angelic and demonic. Poor superficial internists, we cannot comprehend that this is just one of numerous other even more torturing blind alleys. And only under conditions of a certain self–leniency can I pronounce a few more or less definite things. A collective consciousness can be benevolent for big business, the political (communism), or the commercial (book sales). However, it unconditionally ruins the smaller businesses which combine artistry and creativity. In this humble and innermost business, a person, whoever he might be, a poet or a grocery store owner, appeals to his essence, he is thirsty for an extreme individualistic action known as the explosion of personal liberty, as Inspiration.

The three–day August spiritual revolution in Russia was none other than a miracle of mass individualism, since every one of those revolutionary masses should have made his or her personal decision, a youth with a three–colored flag on the barricades, a tankman inside his armored monster, a pensioner in the crowd which protected the Russian Parliament Building and hence, faced almost imminent massacre. Then,

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all of a sudden, all those individualistic creative actions were united into a mass creative action; a general inspiration and intoxication by Freedom. Such miracles, however, happen extremely seldom in the course of history; meanwhile, in the routine development of modern super–civilization, more and more often, a discouraging question arises: does anyone need yours or somebody else's creative Self?

In the super–civilized, computerized, all but completely classified and calculated world turns up a new hoi polloi, a new breed of plebeianss, obsessed with self–indulgence and a cheap hedonism. For all that external multifariousness, these people, as we see, are very well organized into the consuming masses. There is a society in which the cats' front paws are being declawed, the dogs are being deprived of their basic delights, the Pegasuses' wings are being carefully clipped. Those horses still can show off their feathers, but they already cannot fly. The question is: will the new Western plebeians ever be able to get inspired in a mass individualistic spontaneity, in other words, will they be able to say "no" to the new masks of totalitarianism? Among other things, it depends on the presence of that above–mentioned "smaller writer."

Finally, let me tell you a parable about one Soviet Christian. As a boy during Stalin's years, he wore a neck–cross. An excursion to a communal bath–house or a medical examination in a regional military recruitment center was usually turned into a sheer ordeal for him. Everybody made fun of him. Look, this guy has a cross on his neck, what a jerk, wearing a cross like an old woman! Some people demanded: "Take it off immediately, or you'll be kicked out of school!" He didn't take it off. He kept on wearing this symbol of the Crucifixion, and doing so, he was becoming an example of pure individualism in an atheistic, totalitarian society. He believed in God and had no desire to part with a small object of persecution and alienation.

One day, a few decades later, he found himself on a fashionable beach in Yalta. There everybody wore neck–crosses; some semi–criminal nouveau riche and their Schwarzenegger–like bodyguards, the overweight matrons and the slim ladies of virtue, racketeers, gamblers, former Communists and KGB–men . . . And all of a sudden, our Christian became part of that crowd because he still had his same old little cross on his neck. The object of his innermost personality has turned into a trendy decoration. What should I do, he thought, shouldn't I take it off just because all of them sport neck–crosses nowadays? He didn't take it off and it gives to anyone an opportunity to draw any conclusion, even in the Freudian fashion.

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DORIS LESSING

Women's Quests

The women's movement since the sixties has developed in a way that exactly mirrors traditional male attitudes. It is as if we have a pattern burned into our brains and we can't move outside it. I've been thinking recently about why on the whole (and I think most people would agree) the women's movement has not fulfilled its potential. It burst on the scene with enormous energy all over Europe and in America. Yet the energy dissipated and frittered away, and what has actually been achieved is this: that in all the European countries and America and Canada middle class women who were probably young in the sixties and are now middle aged have done rather well. They have good jobs, usually in cultural things like television and radio, newspapers, and so on. This is also true in countries where women have an extremely bad time, like Japan. In today's Japan there are very few women in public life, much fewer than anywhere in the West, and when they are, it's nearly always in cultural things. So, all that great explosion of energy has ended up with a very narrow section of the female population doing better than it did before.

Three categories of women have been particularly ignored by the women's movement. Women at home, as we know, have been always undervalued or taken for granted by society, and when the new feminist movement decided to take no notice of women at home, they were doing only what has always been done. We are now in the situation where a woman will come up to me and say, overcome with embarrassment, undervaluing herself most terribly, "of course, I'm only a housewife." When you start talking to her, you might find that she has six children. But as far as she's concerned, she is nothing because she's only a housewife. It is a very great criticism of the women's movement that they allowed this state of affairs to go on and did absolutely nothing for these women at home who, I think, probably feel even worse about themselves than they did before. It is quite tragic that women should consider themselves "only housewives."

A friend who manages one of the big branches of the National Westminster Bank in London, says that though it is the policy of the bank to try and get women into executive positions, they can't do it. Only a very few women want to take the opportunities offered, such as

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special courses, classes, and so on. When questioned, it becomes very clear that they see their time in the bank as a temporary thing – they will get married and have children. This is how they see their future. This is a choice made by women quite deliberately and should be respected when they do.

Another category of women has been not only neglected, but has been totally overlooked. Nothing was ever said about that class of women who have always – in America and in Europe – been housewives and mothers, who are probably quite well-off, who might or might not have a part-time job, and who do a great deal of charity work. One would think that the feminists would have approved of them because they are extremely hard-working women and accomplish a great deal. Now, these women literally were not noticed. The reason is, of course, that they tend to be conservative or non-political. Therefore, to the movement of the nineteen-sixties, they were quite simply beyond the pale because their politics were wrong, and this was a very political movement. Now, of all the opportunities that we missed (I'm including myself), I think that was the worst because these women tend to have lines out into every section of the infrastructure – into politics, local government, law, and funding.

I have yet to meet a woman who is not a feminist. I don't mean the rampaging kind of feminist or the intellectual feminist or the political feminist, but every woman knows that women get a bad deal. These women, properly integrated into the movement, could have completely transformed that movement. I think now that the time has gone.

The third category of overlooked women are the working women in every country. Their lives have not been affected in the slightest by the nineteen-sixties movement. It will be recalled that there was a rather ghastly miners' strike in England, which went on for over a year. The women for the first time in their lives were out organizing food distribution, soup kitchens, and other supportive activities. A lot of them were saying that it was the first time in their lives that they had ever taken events into their hands and they had felt transformed by it. But why did it have to wait for a miners' strike? Why did the feminists not see these working women as people who could perhaps have benefitted from superior information? What the middle class has in every country is superior information. We know how to make things work – for us, usually.

According to the traditional view of women, we're not fit for hard work – not the real work of the world. We tend to be weak, emotional, hysterical. We need protection. We can't think logically. We can't paint, write, compose. Virginia Woolf said of her character Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* that before she picked up her paintbrush and

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was able to paint, it was as if a whole invisible chorus of men were shouting at her: "Women can't paint! Women can't write!" And against this great psychic barrier, she had to force herself to paint. There is another aspect of this view which is not easy to see for what it is; that is, that women are superior to men in some quite extraordinary, mystic way. You'll often find a man saying, "oh my wife is much better than I am; women are much finer creatures than men." And I noticed as a small girl that this usually came at a time when this man was feeling guilty about something. Now, the kingpin, the underlying thing that holds all this together, is that there is a man's world and a woman's world, and that is how things should be, and the women's movements have reinforced this division and continue to do so. And I have to say that this traditional view is still alive and well in those countries that we call the third world. It's changed quite a lot here, but it has not changed there.

The first time it struck me that old things were going on under new names was when "rap sessions" came in – that is, women talking among each other about their problems - and were presented as a completely new phenomenon. The fact of the matter is that women have always sat around talking about their problems since time began, but it was what the sociologists call an "informal" activity. It did not have a name. I remember our taking a vow that we would never be like our mothers, who sat around in kitchens, complaining about their lives and talking about men. One generation rolls by and something that we despised becomes a part of revolutionary activity.

The women's movement also said that they had created friendships with each other for the first time. If there's one thing that women have always done, it is to support each other and to be friends with each other within the highly structured, male society. The point is that the sixties did not create this. They thought so because they were mostly young women, who do tend, in fact, to drop their girlfriends if a man comes into sight, but usually quite temporarily. I am not saying that "rap sessions" are either good or bad. The only point I'm making is that it is the same as has always happened, but has a new label slapped on it.

As for the accusation about women being too personal, unable to look at large issues, I want at this point to quote a piece some time ago in *Ms*. Magazine about me, and the entire piece was about the view of one of my characters about the female orgasm. Now, I've done quite a lot of things in my life which the women's movement, I should have thought, would approve of; but to be reduced to one of my characters' views on the female orgasm made me extremely annoyed and I began to wonder if this movement was for me at all. This was when I began to think it was not.

Now, this business about our intuition, our sensitivity, our peace-

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loving proclivities is not only nonsense, it is in fact the mirror image of "my wife is better than I am; women are better than men." Whether said by men or women, it is a way of not actually looking at anything clearly. Edward Hall, for example, author of *The Silent Language,* cited the fact that American diplomats going to Iran under the Shah were instructed to reverse all the ideas that we have about the sexes. The men in Iran, they were told, are sensitive, poetry-loving, weep, hold hands in public, embrace, publicly suffer, and generally speaking are very weak characters compared to the women, who have all the characteristics of our men – who are strong and tough.

Perhaps we become what we are pushed into being or what we are surrounded by. We are infinitely flexible. This whole way of looking at people – black people, old people, young people, women, men – in terms of what divides us instead of what we have in common is one of the biggest mistakes we can make. What they don't have in common tends to be something temporary and sociologically conditioned. For example, my mother's way of looking at the world, my way of looking at the world, my daughter's way of looking at the world, and the girls' in their twenties currently living in my house – they couldn't possibly be more different. It is because of the enormous changes made in society by technology. We are very fluid characters and our positions are fluid.

Women have internalized the notion that they are inferior, and that is why they talk about "positive discrimination." What this slogan means is that women should be permitted to write badly and should not be criticized for it. Voluntarily taking the role always allotted to them by men: that of second-rate artists. Women are licensing themselves, because of their long history, to be what men have said they are. I am not criticizing women publishers. We have two of the best, for example, in London – one is Virago and one is The Women's Press. I do wonder if this pattern of separating men and women weren't so deep inside us, could things have been done differently? Would they have been better or worse? I don't know. The separation sometimes goes off into total lunacy. At this very moment in England, an American feminist is running around telling women that they shouldn't ever read any male writers. This is a very terrible thing. Hearing of this kind of thing, many women think, oh my God, I don't want to have anything to do with this. I'm not a feminist! they say. They do not want to be associated with this kind of nonsense.

I recently read a long and very solemn article by a woman, saying that irony was a bourgeois thing and should not be used by women, blacks, and the working class. Well, the first thing you know about this woman is that she is a politico, because it is only politicos who prescribe for whole groups of people what they should be doing. The idea that

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blacks should not use irony: In Zimbabwe, which is the place I know most about in this respect, the black population is so funny. They have such a wonderful command of irony, humor, sarcasm, the whole gamut. I can just imagine myself standing up, saying "No, no bourgeois emotion!"

The women's movement of the nineteen-sixties was born out of political movements, just as the previous feminist movements were born in the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution. Because they were born in politics, they had all the characteristics of a political movement in the full flush of its start – including intolerance of the past. They believed that they occurred for the first time in history. Sex began then too; as Larkin, the poet, said, "we invented sex in the sixties." Not only were these movements intolerant of the past; they were ignorant of the past. They wouldn't learn from history, and there was a great deal to learn from it. Above all, political movements as they begin are in the grip of an elation, which I myself have undergone when I was young. And this elation makes it quite impossible to think about anything. All progress is identified with the group that you're a part of. You are good; everyone else is bad. They are stupid and you are clever, and you are going to change everything. This is a recipe for any left-wing (also, I have to say, right-wing) political movement.

There was also a strong dislike of older women, which led to the undervaluing of the categories of women I mentioned before, because younger women – and I'm again speaking from my experience – tend to fear older women because of their fear of their own future. Also, all political groups and oppositions split endlessly. This of course is what has happened to the women's movement.

Another thing inseparable from political movements is rhetoric: that is, the use of sloganizing, oversimplifying ideas for the purpose of arousing people. One of the results of feminism being grounded in a political movement is that some of the attitudes go back to colonialism. Throughout this entire period, well-off and privileged white feminists have gone out to places like Zimbabwe to tell the local women what they should be doing and thinking. Now, the first time I encountered this, I'd been on two trips around Zimbabwe at what they called the "grass roots" level. And I heard a couple of native women talking about some feminist from Europe who'd been to tell them what to do. Some of these women bring up large families on as little as sixty, seventy, eighty dollars a month. They are unimaginably poor. They work so hard. Because in the past men were hunters and defended everyone and went to war, unless they happen to be in a structured job they tend not to do anything. The first thing you hear when you go to any third world country is "the women do all the work." I heard women say at

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innumerable meetings, "We build the huts. We thatch the huts. We plaster the huts. We plant the grain, we weed it, we harvest it, we sell it. We bring up the children. We cook. And what are you doing, oh, my husband? You are sitting in the beer hall, drinking it away." They have these great ideological battles, but they are good-humored. This is pleasant, compared to the bitterness we often are used to. Quite often, too, they will dance or sing their complaints about men.

When they are lectured by feminists that they should stand up to their husbands they are very funny about it. It is not lost on them that these feminists are – compared to themselves – unimaginably rich, privileged, protected. It is a pity ideologues cannot hear what is said about them when they have left. Or, often, what is acted and sung about them.

It's a Jellyby phenomenon. Do you remember Dickens's character, Mrs. Jellyby, who was always sending parcels to Nigeria or somewhere, while her children were unfed and unclothed? This Jellyby phenomenon is so rooted in all of us that again, it's very hard even to see it. I once went to talk to a group of German sixth graders near Munich. What they wanted to talk about was how they were supporting a group of children someplace in Africa. This was at a time when all the newspapers were full of the sufferings of their local Turkish workers. I suggested they do something about the wives and families of their local Turkish workers. It was so far from how they thought that I had to drop it. But why? It is because in Europe we all belong to ex-colonizing countries and we think in terms of going out and telling the natives how to live, and we don't seem to be able to stop doing it.

I think that this particular great wave of the women's movement is now dissipated, and there will be another one at some point. I would like to think it will not be a spin-off from some political movement. If it should be, we'll have exactly the same mixture as before, and that would be a pity. I personally have more faith in unemotional, very low-key movements – not necessarily big ones – like changing the law, changing little things here and there, because these are things that last. Very large emotional movements usually disappear. In fact, they nearly always disappear, leaving not very much behind, because all that energy goes into words.

The great advances in the situation of women in our time have been the result of technology. One is birth control, because all women in our society take for granted something that has never happened before in the history of the world; that is, that women have control over whether they were going to give birth. The other thing is, of course, labor saving devices, which have transformed women's lives. We do not know what technology is going to come up with next. But I think that we should be ready for things that are unexpected; that will challenge us to

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think differently.

I do remember some admirable feminists I've seen at work. One is a woman I saw in Arizona, a Chicana, who was trying to give birth control to the local population, had been in prison several times for it, and she said she had to fight in this order of importance: her mother and the older women, her brother and father, the priests, and the police. She was a very brave woman.

Feminists in Islam have to fight on a level that hasn't been seen anywhere here, probably for a hundred years. They are persecuted by everyone, sent to prison, and above all these self-appointed God-men, the mullahs, give them a very hard time. They beat them up. God knows what they do not do to them. They are the most heroic women, so brave, so wonderful.

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Question: "If the feminists had emphasized the importance of economic equality for women rather than many of the nonsensical issues they pursued, would that have made the women's movement successful at the time?"

DL: I'm always in favor of economic issues being tackled first because that's where the changes come. You know, it's absolutely no good talking about equality to a woman who is entirely dependent upon a man for any money she gets. That is a very basic thing. Now, I have to talk against myself and say that in a recent survey in England, married couples were asked what the issues were that they found difficult between them, and money was down at the bottom of the list. I don't know what it would be like here.

But, this is much more complicated than we think. For example, probably the most advanced legal system in the world for women is in the Soviet Union. On paper, they have the most wonderful deal. In practice, it is very bad. The women in the Soviet Union have an extremely bad time. So, the legal situation hasn't much affected the actual situation.

Question: "In this country, there is a great movement of politically correct people who disdain any differences between race, class, sex, age, intelligence, etc. Do you think this will lead to a uniform, colorless, gray, sexless androgyny?"

DL: Well, we can disdain these differences as much as we like, but they're all there. Because I don't live here, I can't really interpret that question properly.

Question: "Did the women's movement fail because of its emphasis on sexual freedom instead of economic equality?"

DL: This whole business of sexual freedom I think goes with revolutions.

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It certainly went with the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution. Does being interested in sexual freedom make you less interested in economics? Not necessarily. But there is something interesting here, which I was thinking about recently: God knows at what age, maybe fifteen or sixteen, and living on a farm in the bush in Southern Rhodesia, I read a remark by Shaw, who said that we were all badly oversexed animals. Now, the fact that he said this was not the point. The point is my reaction was as if someone were trying to take something away from me. Now why should I have felt that?

What was there in the air, what is there in the air, that makes sex a right? What it has become for us is a right. Maybe I'm talking pre-AIDS. But it certainly, for our generation, was a right and a way of defining ourselves against our parents, because our lot went in for free love, which is very different from what happened in the sixties. It was extremely romantic. I think my generation was probably the first generation to have sexual freedom as a right, as something that we were due. Because we were fairly new on in this revolution, it had nothing to do with what a friend of mine calls the horizontal handshake; that is, you go to bed with anyone, any time. You had to be in love, you see. Furthermore, we were not worried about getting pregnant because what are now regarded as fairly primitive birth control methods worked. None of us ever had all these sexual diseases people have now.

I personally think that sexually we were the luckiest generation in the history of the world. But that isn't even interesting. What is interesting is that we should have had those attitudes. Why did we have them? Was it because of war or was good old nature at it again, trying to get us to have a lot of children because so many people had been killed. That's also possible, because most of our attitudes were due to something – we were being manipulated by nature or society or something – and we weren't even aware of it. This is what is so frightening. You think that you're a part of something new, original and marvelous, and you discover afterwards that in fact you were just another straw in the wind.

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JOHN BAYLEY

Pushkin's Tales

Pushkin is not only Russia's primary and archetypal author but her most astonishingly versatile one. He was himself fascinated by Mozart, whose music he deeply admired, and there is something Mozartian about his genius, which is in the same manner with variety, gaiety and depth. In one of his "Little Tragedies" – brief "dramas of investigation" as he called them – he contrasted the temperament of Mozart with that of the talented and industrious but uninspired composer Salieri, and implied that genius often prefers to reside in a wholly simple, open and unpretending personality. Keats said of Shakespeare – and he may have been thinking of himself as well – that instead of a powerful and distinctive ego he possessed "negative capability." That sort of capability was certainly Pushkin's own great gift as a writer.

He was as much at home in prose as in verse. Like Shakespeare he borrowed a great deal, and he was perfectly happy to take inferior work and make something wonderful, indeed unique, out of it. He borrowed a dreadfully bad romantic play written in 1816 by the English author and journalist John Wilson, who afterwards became the "Christopher North" of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and wrote a savage review of Tennyson's early verses. Pushkin knew hardly any English, but Wilson's piece had been translated into French, in which he was fluent like all the Russian gentry class. The City of the Plague, which managed to bring in every sort of romantic cliché of the period – mad mothers, duels in graveyards, penitent and golden-hearted prostitutes – was not parodies by Pushkin but purified, and turned into a simple and deeply touching dramatic poem. In many of his prose tales and sketches he also borrowed the romantic properties and techniques of the period – ranging from sentimental stories for young ladies to the historical novels and tales of Sir Walter Scott's followers – and here, as we shall see, a strong element of the mischievous and the parodic sometimes enters, giving piquancy to his magically clear and straightforward prose style.

Pushkin came late to prose. And when he came to it he wrote it deliberately, with the intention of exploring what prose fiction and narrative should be like in Russian, what it could and should attempt to do. The form was in a sense still untried: there was no equivalent in Russia of the English essayists – Steele, Addison, Dr. Johnson – who had

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formed the taste and expectation of their readers, and offered the background model for later writers, from Scott and Jane Austen to Macaulay. Insofar as Pushkin had models they were the French authors of the eighteenth century, with whom however he felt no very strong or sympathetic affiliation, and the Russian historian Karamzin, who had himself copied them. In a brief unfinished essay on "Prose" which Pushkin wrote around 1822, when he was twenty-three years old, he commented that "Voltaire may be regarded as an excellent example of prose style," and that "precision and tidiness are the prime methods of prose . . . poetry is another matter." "Whose prose is the best in our literature?" he goes on. "Karamzin's. This is no great praise."

Nonetheless he felt great respect for the Russian historian who was old enough to be his grandfather; and he was to write a good deal of history himself in the short time that was given to him: an account of the rebellion of Pugachev, the Cossack leader of Catharine the Great's time, and a projected volume on her great predecessor, Peter the Great. Russia's history had always fascinated Pushkin, as can be seen from the way he handled his drama of *Boris Godunov*; and he always took a particular interest in the career of the great Tsar who had founded the modern Russian state, and in the Cossack rebel who had come closest to overthrowing it. The latter is in some sense the hero of Pushkin's short and masterly historical novel, *The Captain's Daughter*, and the Tsar and his entourage would have been the subject of *The Negro of Peter the Great*, an historical sketch which went uncompleted. Pushkin's great-grandfather, probably an Ethiopian, had been presented as a page to Peter from the Turkish court, and had risen to become a general and to found a landowning family. Pushkin was very proud of his African ancestry on his mother's side, that of the Gannibals, and his black hair and swarthy complexion gave him a distinctly African appearance. His friends had an affection for his "negro" face, and he attributed to the same source his volatile temperament and strong sexual passions.

Pushkin began to write poetry while he was still at the Lycée which Alexander I had set up at the village of Tsarskoe Selo (now renamed Pushkin) outside St. Petersburg. His early French-influenced verses are quite unremarkable, being chiefly concerned with his many friends and with the liberal sentiments fashionable among bright young Russians of the upper class in 1818. Only a few years after Russia's great victory over Napoleon political reaction had set in, and the climate of hope and enlightenment had gone sour with the waning popularity among the upper class of Tsar Alexander himself. During these years Pushkin was hard up, and his parents in Moscow – not too well off themselves – showed little interest in his prospects of welfare. He frequented the theater and the

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ladies of the Petersburg demi-monde, and was in a set of rich and rakish young men; he may also have taken part in duels, of a less serious sort than the one in which he was to die less than twenty years later. Many of his friends were active liberals, already engaged in the conspiracies against the government which were to lead to the Decembrist insurrection in St. Petersburg in 1825, after which some were hanged and others exiled for life to Siberia. Pushkin was absent in the south of Russia at the time of the revolt, but would have been on the square with his comrades had he been in town, despite the fact that he knew nothing of their plans and had never been trusted with any secret information. Although he had belonged like them to a revolutionary society called the Green Lamp, his friends knew that he was not really a political animal. They admired his verses and epigrams, which were helping the cause, but considered him too frivolous for the responsibilities of a conspirator.

Pushkin gambled heavily at this time, as he was to do all his life; and his friends and his gambling form the background of one of the most exciting and melodramatic tales he was later to write "Pilovaya Dama," "The Queen of Spades." He began his career as a narrator by writing a sparkling fairy-tale in verse, *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, with its magical opening on the green oak tree by the sea shore, the learned cat on its golden chain, the thirty knights taking lessons form their "sea-tutor" in underwater adventures. These were common tales from Russian folklore which Pushkin had hard when young from his old nurse, to whose memory he was to write one of his most affectionate and best-known lyrics. He recalled the stories she had told him with that vividly unselfconscious charm – his own unique sort of innocence – which instantly became for the Russian language and Russian poetry what Mozart is to music. In spite of the rackety and even dangerous life he habitually led, Pushkin always retained the genius and the freshness of this particular innocence, which seems a part of his wholly unpretentious instinct as an artist for directness, simplicity and economy.

In addition to wonderful lyrics and tales in verse he was also writing in these early days epigrams and verses of a politically fashionable kind, in favour of liberty and against tyranny and those who were taken to be the Tsar's evil advisers. Some of these were soon drawn to Alexander's attention, and it was suggested that a mild form of exile would be a suitable penalty for the talented but misguided poet. Pushkin was sent to south Russia, to serve on the "Board of Protection of Foreign Colonists," but luck was with him, for he fell in with some old and powerful friends, the Raevskys, who virtually adopted him for his period of banishment. He went with them to the Caucasus, where he obtained the material and local color for oriental verse tales in the manner of Byron, and he also fell in love with a youthful Raevsky daughter, whose

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small feet he later celebrated in a famous stanza of his verse novel *Eugene Onegin*. (Pushkin had a thing about ladies' feet, and was as engagingly direct on that subject as he was on his other emotional and social feelings.) Malis Rinich, the young wife of a Dalmatian merchant, was another friend, and in this case mistress too, that he made at this time; but he shared her favors with many others, and he came to know the extremes of jealousy which haunt his first serious and searching long poem, *The Gipsies*. Two particularly beautiful love lyrics are addressed to the memory of Amalia, who later returned with her husband to her native land, where she died of consumption.

Pushkin had the kind of temperament, at once loyal and affectionate, childish and impulsive, that finds it almost impossible to keep out of hot water. The viceroy with a cold heart and a passion for propriety and power (he makes a brief but telling appearance in Tolstoy's last story, *Hadji Murad*), disliked the poet's guidelines bonhomie and sent unfavorable reports on him to the capital. The authorities also opened a letter in which Pushkin cheerily remarked that he had been "taking lessons in atheism." Like a boy expelled from school he was dismissed from the nominal post he held and ordered to live on the small parental estate at Mihailovskoye, not far from Petersburg. There he settled down to work and read, with his old nurse for company. He continued his novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*, and began writing the historical play *Boris Godunov*.

After the failure of the Decembrist conspiracy and the execution or exile of many of his friends, Pushkin was summoned to Moscow by the new Tsar, Nicholas I, and he came expecting the worst. But by one of those paradoxes not uncommon on the Russian public scene the new Tsar received him kindly, having decided that Pushkin was flattered by the young Tsar, took to him, and became for some years a loyal supporter. He is said to have freely confessed his solidarity with the executed rebels, but whatever he did or did not say he was certainly seduced by the Tsar's proffered benevolence and patronage. Part of the bait negligently offered by Nicholas was the opportunity to work in the historical archives, and on a project for educational reform.

Whatever his own inclination the poet thus became involved near the center of power, the great and coming power of imperial Russia. It is difficult to overstress the singularity and importance of this for such a poet and writer as Pushkin, destined as he was for absolute prominence as the model for Russian authorship and literary genius. Pushkin's attitude to authority was possibly not so different from Shakespeare's – he saw through it and yet was fascinated by it, and in a sense admiring – and this ambivalence is in its own way as marked in the great writers who fol lowed him – Gogol and Dostoevsky, Turgenev and Tolstoy. His

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marvelous and uncanny poem *The Bronze Horseman* is as much a celebration of the great Tsar Peter, personified by his equestrian statue on the bank of the river Neva in the city he founded, as it is a cry of pity and protest from underneath, for the little man who only wants to marry his sweetheart and live a quiet life. Written at the height of his poetic maturity, *The Bronze Horseman* was not published in Pushkin's lifetime. At the time he wrote it he was no longer *persona grata* with the Tsar and he was well aware what disapproval the poem would incur from the imperial censorship.

Nonetheless, Pushkin's almost obsessional interest in the figure of Peter the Great had projected itself briefly on Nicholas as Peter's successor, and he compared the opening of Nicholas's reign with Peter's in an early poem ("In hope of all the good and glory/ I look ahead devoid of fear") which won only disapproval from his liberal friends, but which was to be rapturously quoted by Dostoevsky in his encomium on the fifteenth anniversary of Pushkin's death. Pushkin could be "used," just as Shakespeare had come to be, by different factions and ideologies: and yet all Russian readers and writers tacitly acknowledge how free he in fact remains from any connection with such things. It is his art that liberates: the poet Blok wrote of "the gloomy roll-call of Russian tyrants and executioners, and opposite to them one bright name – Pushkin."

Yet for Russians Pushkin touches every nerve in his country's feeling, is central to its whole sensibility. Whereas the politics of Goethe's *Faust* are those of a model German duchy, the politics of *The Bronze Horseman* are those of a rapidly expanding and ruthless empire. And Pushkin was never left isolated, like Dante in exile or Wordsworth after the French Revolution, to work out a personal and compensatory vision of his own. No wonder Russians under Stalin, or in the dark days of invasion and terror, turned instinctively to Pushkin: the responses of his art are so various, yet so immediate and so spontaneous. The poem in celebration of Nicholas's accession to the throne, the tenderly impassive and mysterious poem of farewell to the Decembrists, "Arion," and the indignant rhetoric of the ode against the European supporters of the Polish rebellion, "To the Slanderers of Russia" – all possess in contrasting ways the kind of authority that comes not from the proper sort of ideology or belief but from the urgent pressures of involuntary experience. If he had really come to terms with and become a part of the system, or if he had succeeded in his application – made several times during his exile in Mikhailovskoye – to go abroad into what might have become a kind of emigration, he could not have achieved that luminous understanding both of power and of sympathy with the oppressed which is revealed in *The Bronze Horseman*, in his novel *The Captain's Daughter*,

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and in his history of Pugachev's rebellion.

His ominous relation with the Tsar was in the end to be the death of Pushkin. Having visited the Caucasus again, this time with his brother Lev who was there in the army, he renewed his courtship of Natalia Goncharova, a beautiful girl of seventeen who had turned him down six months before. Her family was as impoverished as Pushkin's, but Natalia and her mother now saw possibilities in his connection with the imperial court. She returned Pushkin's love after a fashion, and when they were married became very dependent on him. She wanted to appear and indeed tried to be a good wife; but she wanted everything else as well that high society could give her. The Tsar soon noticed her remarkable beauty, and insisted on Pushkin becoming a court page, an appointment absurdly incongruous with his age and position, in order that his wife would be invited to every ball at the palace.

The situation might seem set for disaster, and yet Pushkin was not, as was his great successor and near contemporary Lermontov, a tragic character with a Byronic *besoin de fatalité*. Though he was volatile and quick to take offence, his cheerful and good-natured disposition made him, like Mozart, a family man who might have lived to a good age if things had gone differently, and happily seen his children growing up about him. Although her worldliness and flirtatiousness would have continued to vex him for a time, Natalia's fondness for him and dependence on him might have increased as she grew older. What sort of a writer would he have become in that case? That is hard to say, as it is in the parallel cases of Keats, Byron or Shelley. At the time of his death he had almost given up writing poetry, but his extraordinary versatility was expanding in other directions: he was trying out a variety of prose fictions, "inventing" the kinds of novels which his successors would enlarge and develop. Whether or not he would have brought some or all of them to fruition, given time and leisure, these beginnings remain in themselves a remarkable and varied achievement. Some of the unfinished chapters remind us of Stendhal or Balzac, some of Fontane or of Kleist (whom Pushkin never read, and who had shot himself in Berlin when Pushkin was a boy at school); some even of Thackeray, Trollope or George Eliot. Of such diversity were the rapid traces of Pushkin's maturing genius.

His prose work contains masterpieces, like the tales and the historical *nouvelles*, and many more things that might have become masterpieces. But the cares of his family – his wife was extravagant – of business and debt, were beginning to weigh heavily upon him. One thing that cheered him at this time was the permission to found and edit a new journal. *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*) was to be on the model of the famous English reviews like the *Edinburgh*, and Pushkin had hopes of its

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successfully rivalling the other Russian journals. In one of them, published in Moscow, the fervent young ideologue Belinsky was already writing, and was to become a martyr to the great new cause of "committed" literature. That was against all Pushkin's artistic instincts, although he himself was revered by Belinsky, who sought to enlist Pushkin's work after his death in the service of the new social and political awareness.

Probably because it was felt to be behind the times, *The Contemporary* was not a great success, and it was soon losing money. This did nothing to relieve Pushkin's debts, but they had become the least of his troubles. In 1834 a young French royalist emigré, Baron d"Anthes, was admitted to the Tsar's Chevalier Guard through the influence of the Dutch ambassador, who had adopted him as a son. Natalia Pushkin was recognized as the most beautiful woman in the circles he now moved in, and he at once began to pay court to her. Natalia was flattered by his attentions and enjoyed his company, but there is no likelihood that she fell in love with him: she was too much in love already with the whole social world of the capital. Her openness about it with her husband did nothing to decrease his irritation and a growing sense of the impossibility of his position. Where his wife was concerned he had been neither a gloomy nor a jealous husband, and the idea of a wife whose looks were universally admired had appealed to him as much as the prospect of a family and a home. He had no illusions about the probable nature of their life together. "Il nest de bonheur que dans les voies communes," he had written to a friend, quoting the last sentence of Chateaubriand's *René*. "Trials and tribulations will not astonish me. They are included in my family budget. Any joy will be something I did not expect."

But this good-natured sanity and commonsense were alas not the end of the matter. The strong superstitious element in Pushkin's make-up may have convinced him that he had met his fate, in every sense, when he met his wife. In his terse and lively "Little Tragedy," *The Stone Guest*, written in the country in one of his last great creative periods, he presents a Don Juan who loves all his many conquests, but is finally and fatally attracted to me last, the wife of the Commander. He loves her for her statuesque unresponsiveness, and begs from her "one cold and peaceful kiss." In an essay on *The Stone Guest* the poet Anna Akhmatova has suggested it comes closer to Pushkin's own outlook and emotional temperament than any of his other works.

But ordinary commonplace domesticity, the poetic humor and heroism of the commonplace, is never far away from Pushkin, as for his young clerk in *The Bronze Horseman* and for the youthful hero of *The Captain's Daughter*. In his case it took the form of an absurd complication that might have occurred in his own verse novel *Eugene Onegin*: the

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unwelcome presence in his house of Natalia's two elder sister, who had come to the capital to find husbands. Ekaterina Goncharova fell for d'Anthès, who made use of this as a pretext for frequent visits to Natalia. Pushkin had received anonymous notes informing him of his election to "The Serene Order of Cuckolds," implying that his wife had become the Tsar's mistress. This was almost certainly not the case, although after her husband's death she may have become for a short while *maîtresse en titre* to the Tsar. Such cruel facetiousness was just what would upset the poet most, and believing the Dutch ambassador was behind it, he challenged him to a duel. But the old man denied everything, and the quarrel was patched up for a time when d'Anthès actually became engaged to Natalia's sister, the nominal object of his pursuit, and they got married.

Natalia was much upset and came to her husband for comfort and reassurance. In her diary Countess Fiquelmont, of the capital's *beau monde*, suggested that Natalia wanted Pushkin to tell her her handsome admirer still loved her and had only married her sister as second best. Pushkin seems to have advised his wife with tenderness and good sense and asked her to behave with decorum. But it was a fact that her brother-in-law was soon as attentive as ever, and Pushkin was tormented beyond measure by the amusement of society, and its patronage of an increasingly farcical situation. A duel, if he survived it, would certainly mean exile to his estate and the end of this Petersburg nightmare. He sent a note so offensive to the ambassador and his adopted son that d'Anthès challenged him, and a duel was fought the next day in a quiet suburb deep in snow. D'Anthès, who was a crack shot, fired first and Pushkin was fatally wounded. Prostrate, he managed to fire his own shot and slightly wound his opponent. He died two days later and was buried at the monastery near Mikhailovskoye, his funeral attended by a great crowd of all classes. The Tsar wrote to Pushkin on his deathbed, urging him to die as a Christian and promising to look after his family. His debts were paid and his widow received a pension, afterwards marrying an officer who had been of their circles. D'Anthès was expelled from Russia and returned to France where he entered politics and died in 1895. He never expressed the smallest penitence or regret for having killed Russia's greatest poet.

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In his later years, when he had taken to writing mostly prose, Pushkin did his work almost entirely at the small country estate of Boldino, in the months of October and early November. These "Boldino autumns," as they have come to be called, were productive of an astonishingly varied quantity of marvellous compositions. Like the *improvisatore* of his own fragmentary medley, "Egyptian Nights," Pushkin

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wrote very fast when the mood was on him, for twelve or fifteen hours a day, and revised afterwards at his leisure back in the capital. The Boldino autumn of 1830 saw the creation both of the "Little Tragedies" – *The Stone Guest*, *Mozart and Salieri*, and two others – and the *Tales of Belkin*, Pushkin's first considered and completed venture into prose, which was published anonymously in the following year. He also wrote the magical poem *Ocen* ("Autumn"), included in the *Penguin Book of Russian Verse* edited by Dimitri Obolensky, which in its relaxed and lyrically humorous stanzas gives a good idea of Pushkin's temperament and working methods.

Like Shakespeare Pushkin was not really a literary inventor or innovator: he was prepared to take up and supply whatever seemed in demand, remarking once that he sold his wares for the best price he could get, as the cobbler did his boots. In this spirit he decided very deliberately to write *prose*: poetry having come to him when he was young as naturally as the song to the bird. Every sentence of the *Tales of Belkin* is deprived of any poetic cadence, and made terse, transparent and effective. Pushkin very likely had in mind the remarks of his contemporary, the novelist Betuzhev. "A child is attracted to a rattle before it is attracted to a compass . . . We have ceased to listen to poetry since everyone became able to write it. So there is a general outcry. 'Give us prose. Water, plain Water.' "

Pushkin might have smiled good-naturedly at these slighting comments on his natural medium; but it is a fact that, unlike earlier Romantic writers such as Coleridge, he thought the two media should be very firmly demarcated. "No writer of both prose and verse," observed one of his early critics, "in Russia or even in the west, has made such a severe and firm boundary between the two kinds of utterance." Russia's remarkable literary renaissance was developing so rapidly that it seems to have foreshortened in a few years the change from poetry seeming the "natural" medium to a time when prose and the novel were more dominant. With us the Elizabethans and Jacobeans who, as it were, "spoke" poetry are succeeded by Augustans who spoke prose, and then by Victorians who talked in fiction – a change that took place over more than three centuries. In Russia something like the same process occurred within a single generation. Pushkin and Lermontov, a poet who went on to write the remarkable novel, *A Hero of Our Time*, are its two great exemplars, both starting with poetry and ending with the novel.

But there were also many and in fact more popular writers at the time who plunged naively into the world of popular historical romance – the world familiarized throughout Europe by the novels of Sir Walter

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Scott. Pushkin also borrowed from that source – the denouement of *The Captain's Daughter* bears a strong resemblance to that of *The Heart of Midlothian*, with Catharine the Great substituted for Queen Caroline – but Pushkin's style and approach have nothing in common with Scott's. It was Bestuzhev, the man who called for "plain water," who most closely imitated Scott, producing a Russian equivalent of that leisurely and relaxing medium, full of cliché and of the picturesque. The Waverley novels operated by sweep and volume, not by any discrimination of sentence or phrase. Pushkin's contemporaries and successors, even Lermontov in *A Hero of Our Time*, use the flow of imperfections and flowery clichés that were part of the new "spontaneity" of prose – its equivalent of the dashing artlessness of modern ballad and poetic romance – and it is this that Pushkin avoids, although without seeming to try to do so. His prose sounds prosaic, but never vapid or banal. Its spare elegance, which already seemed old-fashioned in Pushkin's time, is that of the eighteenth rather than the nineteenth century. This was remarked on by his friends and contemporaries; and it is significant that when the *Tales of Belkin* first appeared it was accorded none of the widespread popularity that had greeted the first appearance of Pushkin's poems.

It must have seemed very simple, perhaps too simple, but this simplicity concealed a remarkable degree of subtlety. Lermontov saw it and made use of it. His exceedingly clever novel makes a very sophisticated use of multiple narrators, and this device is also the main technical feature of the *Tales of Belkin*. Pushkin, like other writers, probably got the basic idea from Scott, who had used it in the Waverley novels to maintain the appearance and convention of anonymity. Indeed it had become a common convention, though seldom so effectively and expertly handled as it is by Pushkin and Lermontov, or as it was to be by Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights*. The Victorians acquired an appetite for this sort of narrative mystification; but Pushkin's first audience were somewhat baffled, and certainly did not appreciate at first the finer points involved. They read the stories as short and rather simple-minded exercises in sentiment, romance and melodrama; and they were surprised and disillusioned when the word got around that they had been written by Russia's foremost poet.

In fact the first reader to really appreciate the *Tales of Belkin* was not Russian at all but French, and himself a writer. Prosper Mérimée had traveled widely in eastern Europe and Russia, and had learned the languages. Although young – four years younger than Pushkin – he already had a reputation, and Pushkin himself may well have read his early tales, so the influence was not all one way. Brief and sensational pieces, whether in the form of tales or dramas, like Pushkin's own "Little

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Tragedies," were very much in vogue at the time; and Mérimée had made his own name with his *Théatre de Clara Gazul*, which at first he successfully passed off as having been written by a Spanish actress. He also hoaxed his public with *La Guzla*, a collection of "illyria" poetry he had composed himself; and he went on to publish in 1845 the story of "Carmen" which inspired Bizet's opera.

Mérimée was also the first Westerner to discern the genius of Pushkin's poetry, although, when he attempted to interest his friend Flaubert in a translation of it, the novelist merely commented: "Il est plat, votre poète." Pushkin's lyrics never have revealed, and never will, their true virtues in translation. Their effect is all in the voices they give to the Russian language. But so sophisticated an artist as Flaubert would certainly have seen the point of the *Tales of Belkin*, which Mérimée translated in a spirited but rather free fashion, using the devices of sensationalism and understatement for their own sake, as his own tales are apt to do, and which indeed suits their crisp and ironic French idiom. "Come il insiste peu!" observed Mérimée admiringly of Pushkin's light touch; but it is significant that his own stories became much better known than Pushkin's internationally and have had a much greater influence on short-story style, contributing at a later date to the manner of a Kipling. Pushkin's are too uninsistent even to make the kind of deadpan impact we associate with the modern short story.

But they have other and in many ways more peculiar charms. Pushkin seems to have felt that prose should be as unmemorable as possible, never trapping itself in a phrase or an effect. As a poet he had only to open his mouth and what came out became eternal and proverbial in his own tongue. His instinct was that prose should be the opposite – a complete contrast. The device of multiple narration has much to do with this, dissolving as it does the single narrative tone of anecdote or *nouvelle*. When he had begun the "novel" about his own ancestor, *The Negro of Peter the Great*, he may have broken off in response to the tone such a genre was imposing on him: the local color of the current English historical novel, and the conventional French tale of gallantry and intrigue. The elaborate security measures which hedge the *Tales of Belkin* defend it from the dominance of such recognizable tones. We cannot, so to speak, tell from what direction the words are coming. The stories escape into a limbo in which the elements of parody appear and vanish without the apparent intention or consent of the narrator. The tales renew entirely the concept of the anecdote, as Pushkin's "Little Tragedies" renewed that of the dramatic fragment.

The "author" has undertaken only to arrange publication of the stories of "the late Ivan Petrovich Belkin"; so he writes to Belkin's heir

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and next of kin, who turns out never to have met Belkin, and who refers the would-be editor to a friend, a "candid and simple" fellow, who rambles on about the Belkin's literary projects (Pushkin always had a good many of those on hand) and how his manuscript. has been used by the housekeeper "for a number of domestic purposes," the windows in her room begin repaired with pages from an unfinished novel. Belkin had picked up tales from various quarters, and a footnote refers to the entries he made on his sources. "Miss K. I. T." supplied the romantic tales, and an army lieutenant "The Shot." Nor do the devices for referring authorship further and further back end there, for "The Shot" has three internal narrators and "The Stationmaster" two.

In spite of their air of parody, and of conscious and almost demure mischievousness, the *Tales of Belkin* are by no means lacking in human warmth and human comedy. They are not just experimental set pieces. The funniest of them, "The Station-master," is both the most parodic and yet at the same time the most moving, even compassionate, of the stories. The fashionable notion of "feeling" and "sentiment" had long since arrived in Russian literary circles, through the novels of Rousseau, and above all through Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*, which had an extraordinary success in Russia, greater than in any other European country. They had been vulgarized in the historian Karamzin's novel *Poor Liza*, a tear-jerker whose title explains itself, and which had made readers in St. Petersburg and Moscow weep buckets back in 1872. Poor Liza was seduced and abandoned by her lover and committed suicide: Dunya, the stationmaster's beautiful daughter, appears bound for the same fate, certainly in the eyes of her grief-stricken father; but then the unexpected occurs and the conventional pattern is broken. The hussar with whom she has run off does not desert her but makes her happy. As his mistress she is delighted to have children and grand clothes and a carriage; and she does not forget her sorrowing and unforgiving father but comes to kneel and weep by his grave. The reversal of expectation is not only comic by extremely touching, as well as being perfectly possible.

As early readers must have spotted, and critics were later to demonstrate, it also reverses the parable of the prodigal son, texts and pictures from which adorn the walls of the station master's little house. And, when Dunya goes off with her hussar, her father persists in interpreting the event in the light of the parable. He will search for his "lost lamb," forgive her and bring her home. When he traces the hussar to Petersburg the trail of the unexpected begins. He begs for his daughter to be restored to him, even though her honor is lost, but the ashamed and yet exasperated young man assures him that Dunya is very well off. "She loves me; she has become unaccustomed to her former style of life. And

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neither you nor she will forget what has happened." The parable in the Gospels necessarily passes over an important point to which Pushkin's spare narrative acutely draws our attention. Of course the prodigal son and his father could never have been on the same terms again: there would always have been unease and resentment. And a very droll and Pushkinian incident follows in this story. The young man forces some banknotes on the stationmaster, which he indignantly flings on the pavement. "After having gone a few steps he stopped, reflected and returned . . . but the notes were no longer there " A young dandy has already picked them up and made off in a cab. As he tells his tale to the "Titular Counsellor" the old man wipes away tears, "partly induced by the punch, of which he had drunk five glasses in the course of his narrative, but for all that they had moved me deeply." Ironic reversal of the parable continues to the end, for it is the father and not the prodigal child who goes to the bad. He dies of drink, grieving over the fall of his prodigal daughter, who is bringing up a family in happiness and security.

None of Pushkin's parodies deride or belittle their source, but give it a further dimension of human interest. In "The Snowstorm" the concealed target is the contemporary vogue for tales about romantic elopements and demon bridegrooms; and the narrator – "Miss K. I. T." – not only shares the romantic feelings of her hero and heroine, rejoicing in the coincidence that brings Burmin to the feet of the girl on whom he has played his heartless jest, but she also appears unaware of the literary material – like the nightmare end of the heroine in Bürger's famous poem *Lenore* – on which her story draws. The spontaneity and innocence of the narrator thus gives the paradigm of the tale a new lease of freshness and surprise. The narrator gives a personal life to the story material, and Pushkin in the background plays this off against the convention of the anecdote itself. The shop assistant who is anecdotalist in "The Undertaker" naturally enters into the story's keen pride in trade, cheating and securing customers, to the point of sharing a kind of touchy dignity on the customers' behalf after they have been buried.

The sense of human nature in the stories is as penetrating, but also as casual and as unemphatic, as it is in Shakespeare's plays. The old stationmaster, for instance, cannot understand that the events in individual lives do not necessarily follow the traditional patterns of the moral law and the scriptures. In "The Shot," Silvio is a man fixated by his own image, a melodramatist cut off from the prosaic world, and the operation of prose reveals him as a figure isolated by his eccentricity of will from the humdrum uncertainty and contingency of the prose world. I feel sure that Lermontov borrowed the figure of Silvio, and metamorphosed him into *A Hero of Our Time*. But there is nothing in the least demonstrative or exemplary about Pushkin's mode of narrative: his stories always avoid

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being *contes*. Lermontov learned from him the odd mixture of familiarity and evasiveness in the *Tales*; and Gogol, who deeply admired them, may be said to have developed and elaborated evasiveness as a sometimes almost flamboyant trademark of his own. Dostoevsky was to be influenced by Pushkin in the same direction.

Pushkin only created the figure of Belkin after the tales themselves were written, as a part of their mechanism of anonymity. He then seemed too promising a concept to waste, and Pushkin at once went on to write the "History of the Village of Goryukhino," in which Belkin himself appears as the first-person narrator. This brilliantly funny and engaging piece relaxes all the method of the *Tales*. We learn how Ivan Petrovich, after a brief and uneventful military career, enters into his paternal inheritance, and out of sheer boredom determines to become a writer:

> All kinds of poetry – for I still did not think if humble prose – were considered and appraised, and I at last opted for an epic poem, drawn from the history of the fatherland.

The epic hangs fire, and other kinds of writing are tried – ballads, tragedies, stories and finally history. Ivan Petrovich's attempts are in one sense a burlesque of Pushkin's own literary progress – a comment on the transition from poetry to prose, and from epic and romance to plain historical record. His unfinished "history" of the manor seems to take an unintentionally Shandean view of the nature and possibility of history itself; and "like a certain historian whose name escapes me" Ivan Petrovich lays down his pen and goes into the garden to reflect on what he has accomplished.

Attempting to transform the routine of life at the manor into history, as Gibbon had transformed the Roman empire, Ivan Petrovich behaves towards the reality of his world rather as Silvio and the stationmaster behave in the tales he has collected: authorship and history are to him an escape from the facts, as Silvio has his chivalric isolation in revenge, and the stationmaster his fantasy of the prodigal son. His appended "source" reveal the true, untidy, comic and miserable nature of things on a Russian estate, in which the peasants themselves take refuge from reality by looking back on a mythological "happy time." Pushkin's perception of history is not that of a scholar, but that of a Shakespeare whose understanding lies in his imagination and his creative powers.

The same quickness of perception flickers through the way he writes about high society. Before the *Tales of Belkin* were planned and completed he had been experimenting with a society novel, of which the

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opening pages exist in two or three fragmentary versions, notably one which begins "The guests were arriving at the dacha." As it happens, Tolstoy was to mention this opening when he was himself meditating on his novel *Anna Karenina*, exclaiming with admiration that this was the kind of way in which to begin a story. Several of his early drafts of *Anna Karenina* begin along similar lines. The way Tolstoy envisaged Anna and her situation was probably influenced and even inspired by Pushkin's sketch of a certain type of society woman at odds with her environment – intelligent, lonely, passionate, foolhardy, eventually shunned by her peers a misfit. There seems every likelihood that Pushkin knew such a person in the circles he frequented in the capital, and that he sympathized warmly with her predicament.

Be that as it may, he certainly had the idea of writing a novel about such a woman, her admirers and her eventual fate, treating the subject from the standpoint of the detached omniscient narrator, who both understands and feels for the subject of his scrutiny. Such a method would be used and indeed become common in later nineteenth-century fiction, and was already foreshadowed in Stendhal's novels, about which Stendhal himself once quizzically observed that they would obtain their readership at the end of the century. Flaubert, Tolstoy and George Eliot would all in their different ways perfect the method. But it seems likely that Pushkin, feeling his way into a style of prose that suited him, found the problem of striking a balance a hard one to solve, and preferred experimenting with a more personal and hybrid form of narrative, in which humor, fantasy, and sober realism could all be present on his own terms. This was how he shaped the melodrama of "The Queen of Spades," his most successful and popular tale; and how – in a more grotesque genre – he proposed to combine verse and prose in an original medley for "Egyptian Nights," written in the autumn of 1835. Like *Eugene Onegin* itself, both have the Pushkinian quality of being touching and comical, sober and extravagant, at the same time; and both involve Pushkin's own ideas and lifestyle without compromising his own personality and his own privacy.

Its success lies in the force and sympathy of its human portrayals – the ancient countess, Hermann the Napoleonic hero, the modern young man on the make, and the *ingénue* Lizaveta Ivanovna. Although the tale is unified and complete the characters seem held in an unobtrusive but rigorous isolation from each other, reminiscent of the isolation which surrounded the heroine of Pushkin's abortive novel of society. The same high society, the world of the old countess and her grandson Tomsky, is the background of "The Queen of Spades," and the atmosphere of that world is established with subtle simplicity in the opening sentence: "They

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were playing cards with Narumov, of the Horse Guards" – the same kind of opening sentence which Tolstoy admired and held up as a model. In his marvellous and terrifying stories of the Far Eastern *gulag*, *Kolyma Tales*, Varlaam Shalamov imitated this opening sentence, transposing the situation into the little world of privileged *zeks* who run the horse transport underground in the prisoner-operatedgoldmines, and in their spare time play cards, often with their own lives at stake.

"They were playing cards . . . ." "They" are, so to speak, the people to belong to – the best people, with too much easy confidence even to bother to think of themselves as such, or to look down on others. The old countess accepts this charmed circle as she accepts herself, with the *dégagée* apathy of those who have always retained, in ever circumstance, every advantage simply by being still alive – "the hideous but indispensable ornament of the ball-room." Outside the circle stands Hermann, the ambitious young engineer officer and a man of the will; and outside it in another sense is the countess's young ward and companion, Lizaveta Ivanovna, with her pining youthful heart and forlorn desire to love and be loved. Completed by the negligent good-hearted Tomsky, the tableau presents an incomparably vivid and economical picture, which gives its real substance to the fantastic and melodramatic events of the story.

Pushkin was very proud of the fact that after the story appeared all the young gamblers of St. Petersburg began compulsively punting on the three seven and aces, the magic numbers which the old countess confided under duress to Hermann. Pushkin himself was very superstitious, and an inveterate gambler for high stakes to the end of his life, preferring himself to keep the bank a the game of *shtos,* or faro, which he describes. In "The Queen of Spades" Pushkin was writing for an audience who knew all about gambling, but it is not entirely easy for the modern reader to follow the pattern of event. The procedure would have been that the punter, Hermann, and the banker, Chekalinsky, each had a pack of cards. Hermann selected a card – the three on his first night – and put it face down on the table with his stake. The banker then dealt from his pack, facing a card alternately left and right. If a card of the same points as the punter had selected came up on his right the banker won; if on his left he lost to the punter. Hermann therefore wins on his deal two nights running. The punter could risk his stake plus all his previous winnings, as Hermann does on the third night, by turning down the corners of his card.

A writer such as Balzac or Kipling, or Ian Fleming at a later date, would have explained the gambling operation in detail, but Pushkin's spare narrative concentrates on the psychological suspense and the interplay of character. The supernatural element is itself psychological, with

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no resemblance to those tales of Hoffmann and Balzac in which a supernatural secret gives power to the possessor and in the end corrupts and destroys him. It would be hard to imagine anyone less suited to such a role as the old countess. She was not corrupted by the magic formula because she had no need of money and never thought of it. Once her debt of honor in Paris was paid (and as Pushkin reminds us she would not have been concerned to discharge a debt to a tradesman) she was never tempted to use her secret again, except once to help out a young protegé, and she never passed the secret on to her sons. The moral is obvious: class has no need of magic. Adhering to a way of life with all the tenacity of unconscious conviction, it is as difficult to corrupt as to reform. The old countess is just as she would have been if the extraordinary secret had never been revealed to her.

For young Hermann, on the contrary, a road to the power that money brings is all-important. The final touch at the macabre worldliness of the countess's funeral is the old court dignitary's whispered comment to the English bystander that the young officer who goes up like the others, to bid farewell to the coffin, was the countess's natural son. The Hermanns, and all they stand for, are indeed the natural sons of the old regime, and in a disturbing sense. There is cheerful irony in the ending – Hermann removed, Lizaveta married, Tomsky and the Princess Pauline betrothed – but the deeper implications of the tale are not at all reassuring. The future is haunted by the past it has destroyed and sought to exploit. When she is dead the old countess enters into a sinister intimacy with Hermann, unthinkable when she was alive; and the wink from the coffin is horribly at variance with her living self, and with the funeral decorum around her.

Although he admired "the Scottish enchanter," Pushkin was well aware of the shortcomings of his imitators. "These pale productions are read all over Europe," he remarked in a review. "Is it because the portrayal of bygone times, even if feeble and inaccurate, has . . . charm for the imagination sunk in the humdrum monotony of the present?" He probably felt that only recent history could be turned into genuine art; and both *The Captain's Daughter* and the unfinished *Dubrovsky* are set in the reign of Catharine, virtually "Sixty years since," like the subtitle of Scott's own progenitor, *Waverley*. Pushkin's prose style, with its sure sense of timing and its equable but resonant simplicity, is admirably suited to the tale of adventure in the recoverable past – perhaps better suited than to the society novels which he projected but never followed through. Pushkin's genius is of the kind that having made its point cannot bear to fill in the details, to repeat or to indulge itself in local color for its own sake. He admired Byron for being a writer who "liked to spring like a tiger from the jungle," and abandon his prey to others after

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a successful kill. That seems to be why he so often lost interest in a theme after he had revealed its inner potentiality.

But as his history of Pugachev's rebellion shows, he had staying power when he was deeply interested in the implications of so far-reaching and recent an event in Russian history. No wonder Tsar Nicholas, an expert in the techniques and precautions of despotism, took a special interest in Pushkin's task, and encouraged its progress, although both the history and its companion in fictional form, *The Captain's Daughter* had to pass an inquisitive and persnickety censorship. And yet what must have specially engaged Pushkin as he developed the novel was the relation he found coming into being between Grinev – the innocent, well-intentioned young man who does not think to question the status of the gentry class to which he belongs and its right to rule – and the crafty and cruel but also generous and amiable Cossack who has set up his own kind of rule among the peasantry. Pugachev is capable both of generosity and kindness: there is real fellow-feeling in young Grinev when he thinks of him with affection – and by his Christian name "Emelya" – disturbed in "spite of myself" at the thought of the fate that awaits him.

Every character in *The Captain's Daughter* has the kind of simple reality which Pushkin's swift and economical prose seems to bring effortlessly into being. Grinev's first arrival at the fortress, and the night of the blizzard, when he meets Pugachev, are especially memorable. Such moments occur too in *Dubrovsky* – the episode of setting fire to the family house with the officials in it, and the rescue of the cat by the blacksmith, are in Pushkin's best vein – but Durbrovsky himself is not much more than the conventional romantic mystery man of the period; and the feel of the tale never takes on a life of its own. The truth is that Pushkin – again not so unlike Shakespeare – seems to have had small instinctive gift for shaping and inventing a plot. Scott gives him a helping hand in *The Captain's Daughter*, for even the relation of Grinev and Pugachev echoes that between the young Waverley and Fergus McIvor. But after taking an interest in authentic court reports about a tyrannical landowner and his victim, a young member of the gentry who took in consequence to a life of banditry and revenge, Pushkin seems to have lost interest in his theme, and cast about for a way of finishing it that would suit a romance melodrama. Five possible synopses in Pushkin's hand exist, in most of which the story was to continue with Dubrosky escaping abroad, after Maria Kirilovna's wedding and her refusal to run off with him, and his return to Russia after she has become a widow. The authorities become suspicious, and there is a reference to a meeting at an inn and the figure of a police chief, who might have developed along the lines of Dostoevsky's quiet policeman in *Crime and Punishment*.

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Pushkin's own instinct might well have been to let the story finish without a happy ending, unfolding it to a natural conclusion as he had done in the case of his verse novel *Eugene Onegin*. But where prose was concerned he found himself much more in the grip of contemporary fashion and genre.

And yet the *Tales of Belkin*, "The Queen of Spades" and *The Captain's Daughter* are not only as much masterpieces as his tales in verse, but carry the same unmistakable and original stamp of his style and personality. That personality is still somewhat baffling to western readers, accustomed as they are to the idea of a "great writer" taking life and his art much more seriously than Pushkin seems to. The Russians can see Pushkin's experiment and inspiration everywhere in their literature, but for us it is not so easy. We may feel dissatisfied by what seems so simple or even obvious, to the point of saying with Flaubert, isn't this rather flat? But Pushkin is an acquired taste, and as we acquire it we begin to realize more and more the subtleties that lie beneath the simplicity of his manner. It is significant that even English and American writers who discover Pushkin today – the poet and novelist D. M. Thomas is one of them – can find him as inspiring now as Russian authors have always done; and as apt to oblige in complementing and leading on their own thoughts and ideas. Pushkin can seem like his own *improvisatore* in *Egyptian Nights*, just as in another sense he is like the aristocratic Charsky, who every now and then retires from his worldly life in own into the country and there scribbles down a load of "rubbish." But he also has an undoubted resemblance to the great queen Cleopatra, whom Pushkin, like Shakespeare, portrays as being at once infinitely and poetically seductive, and also sublimely commonplace and down to earth. The most engaging moment in that medley is when the ingenuous young lady's suggestion for a subject is drawn from the urn, and the *improvisatore* deferentially asks which lover she had in mind,"for the great queen had many." Pushkin's own powers of story-telling are almost equally varied.

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ROBERT S. WISTRICH

The Longest Hatred

"Anti-Semitism" is a problematic term, first invented in the 1870s by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr to describe the "non-confessional" hatred of Jews and Judaism which he and others like him advocated. The movement which began at that time in Germany and soon spread to neighboring Austria, Hungary, France and Russia was a self-conscious reaction to the emancipation of the Jews and their entry into non-Jewish society. In that sense it appeared to be a novel phenomenon, since, as the early anti-Semites were at pains to stress, they were not opposed to Jews on *religious* grounds but claimed to be motivated by social, economic, political or "racial" considerations.

Religious hostility in late nineteenth-century Europe was regarded by many intellectuals as something medieval, obscurantist and backward. There was clearly a need to establish a new paradigm for anti-Jewishness which sounded more neutral, objective, "scientific" and in keeping with the liberal, enlightened *zeitgeist*. After all, Jews by virtue of their emancipation had become *equal* citizens before the law in European societies which, formally at least, had abandoned discrimination based on religious differences. Anti-Semitism which grounded itself in racial and ethnic feelings provided a way around this problem. By focusing attention on allegedly permanent, unchanging characteristics of the Jews as a social and national group (which depicted them as being fundamentally "alien" to their fellow citizens) the anti-Semites hoped to delegitimize Jewish equality. They sought to restore the social boundaries which had begun to disappear in Europe, and they ultimately expected to return the Jews to their earlier pre-emancipated status.

"Anti-Semitism" – a term which came into general use as part of this politically motivated anti-Jewish campaign of the 1880s – was never directed against "Semites" as such. The term "Semitic" derived from the Biblical Shem, one of Noah's three sons, and designated a group of cognate languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Babylonian, Assyrian and Ethiopic, rather than an ethnic or racial group. Similarly, the contrasting term "Aryan" or "Indo-European," which became popular at this time, referred originally to the Indian branch of the Indo-European languages. Strictly speaking, "Aryans" were people speaking Sanskrit and related languages who had invaded India in pre-historic times and

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subjugated its indigenous inhabitants. Indians and Iranians were "Aryans" but Germans and North Europeans certainly were *not*, any more than European Jews, who no longer spoke Hebrew, could be meaningfully described as "Semites."

Nevertheless, in the late nineteenth century this pseudo-scientific nonsense became eminently respectable even among the European intellectual elites, so that the distinction between "Aryan" and "Semite" was easily grafted on to the much older distinction between Christian and Jew. As a result, for the last hundred years, the illogical term "anti-Semitism," which never really meant hatred of "Semites" (for example, Arabs) at all, but rather hatred of Jews, has come to be accepted in general usage as denoting *all* forms of hostility towards Jews and Judaism throughout history.

There is clearly a danger in using anti-Semitism in this overly generalized way, extending it to all times and places regardless of specific circumstances, differences between historical epochs and cultures, or other factors that might give the term more specificity and critical sharpness. Anti-Semitism is *not* a natural, metahistorical or a metaphysical phenomenon whose essence has remained unchanged throughout all its manifestations over the centuries. Nor is it an intrinsic part of the psychic structure of Gentiles, a kind of microbe or virus which invariably attacks non-Jews, provoking the "eternal hatred" for the "eternal people." Such a theory, which has some roots in the Jewish tradition ("Esau hates Jacob," the legacy of Amalek, etc.) and was adopted by early Zionists in Eastern Europe such as Pinsker, Lilienblum and Sokolow, is quite unhistorical.

It ignores the fact that Jews have often been welcomed by the surrounding society; that their equality of status and integration was accepted as a binding legal and social principle in many countries during the modern period; and it crucially forgets that Jewish participation in cultural, scientific, economic and political life since the Western Enlightenment has in many respects been a remarkable success story. If anti-Semitism had really been a "hereditary disease of the Gentiles," or been based on an instinctive racial aversion to Jews (as anti-Semites sometimes claim), such a development would have been impossible. Admittedly, there has also been a backlash to Jewish integration, influence or success at some points in time – whether in first-century Alexandria and Rome, in medieval Muslim or Christian Spain, in *fin-de-siècle* Paris and Vienna or in Weimar Germany – but this pattern has definite historical causes and has nothing to do with any theory of innate Gentile anti-Semitism.

Any empirically valid discussion of anti-Semitism or hatred of Jews must, in my opinion, first of all come to terms with the problem of its

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historical continuity and development. This necessarily leads us back to the Hellenistic era, when a widespread Jewish Diaspora first emerged which was quite distinctive in the ancient world. Not only were the Jews the only monotheistic minority in this pagan world, bearers of a doctrine of election which claimed that Judaism was the sole truth, the supreme ethical teaching; not only did they persist in their historic existence as a separate social and religious group; not only did they refuse even to intermingle with the Gentiles because of their own dietary laws, Sabbath observance and prohibition on intermarriage; above all, this unique Diasporic nation which had set itself apart asserted spiritual supremacy over the polytheistic majority.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that such special characteristics and claims could provide the hostility or resentment which one finds in Greek and Latin literature. To some extent this pre-Christian anti-Semitism looks like the normal, xenophobic prejudice which has prevailed between ethno-religious groups during virtually every period of history. But such a plausible conclusion ignores the *unique* compactness and religiously sanctioned exclusiveness. This does not mean that the cause of Anti-Semitism lay in the Jews themselves, but it can help us to understand how the peculiar brand of social hostility which we call by this name first arose as *one* possible response (there were of course others, ranging from admiration to indifference) to the reality of Jewish exclusiveness.

Pagan anti-Jewishness is important because it provided fertile soil for its Christian heirs, and it also reminds us that there was a significant form of hostility to Jews in Antiquity which *preceded* the birth of Christianity. Not a few early Christians had, for example, absorbed this Jew-hatred as a consequence of their pagan upbringing. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Christianity would appear on the stage of history as a *negation* of Judaism in a much deeper sense than its pagan predecessors; that its theological polemics against Judaism were to be vital to its own identity far more than was the case for any other religion or culture. No other religion, indeed, makes the accusation that Christianity has made against the Jews, that they are literally the *murderers* of God. No other religion has so consistently attributed to them a universal, cosmic quality of evil, depicting them as children of the Devil, followers of Antichrist or as the "synagogue of Satan." The fantasies concerning Jews which were developed in medieval Christendom, about their plotting to destroy Christianity, poison wells, desecrate the host, massacre Christian children or establish their world dominion, represent a qualitative leap compared with anything put forward by their pagan precursors. Such charges, beginning with deicide, are peculiarly *Christian*, though in the twentieth

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century they have been taken up by Islam as well as by secular political religions such as Nazism or Bolshevism which have exploited the fiction of a Jewish world conspiracy.

Thus it is evident that Christian anti-Judaism and antisemitism did add a wholly new theological and *metaphysical* dimension to anti-Semitism which was absent in its pagan forerunners and quite distinct from the stigmatizing or persecution of other minority groups. The pervasive influence of Christianity (from the fourth century AD), on government, culture and society led to the marginalization of the Jews and their institutionalized oppression. The Christian theology which had usurped the Divine Promises to the Jews and proclaimed the Church as God's Chosen Elect, cast Israel in the role of God's forsaken, rejected and abandoned people – condemned to wandering and exile.

In the writings of the Church Fathers the negation of the Jews' religious and cultural values became a central motif. An overwhelmingly negative stereotype of the "deicide people" was transmitted through theological writings, the sermons of the clergy, the mystery and Passion plays, folklore, ballads and the plastic arts. This hostile collective stereotype of a Jewish people bearing the mark of Cain, a nation of Christ-killers and infidels in league with the Devil, became deeply embedded in the Western psyche following the massacres of Jews during the Crusades. During the next few centuries, new and even more irrational myths were added, that of the Jew as a ritual murderer, desecrator of the Host wafer, an agent of Antichrist, usurer, sorcerer and vampire. As Christianity spread among all the peoples of Europe, this devastating image crystallized until it was an integral part of European and Western culture, a fact which more than any other accounts for the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism to this day.

Jew-hatred no longer required any connection with real human relationships, indeed it no longer needed the presence of Jews at all. The stereotype had acquired a cultural dynamic of its own, as in medieval England after the expulsion of 1290, in Spain after the mass Jewish exodus of 1492, or in the "Judaizing" persecutions of Muscovite Russia. Even today, in post-Holocaust societies like Poland, Austria, or Rumania where there are very few Jews left, one finds a similar phenomenon of "anti-Semitism without Jews." Nothing could make clearer the fallacy that anti-Semitism can be simplistically viewed as a "natural" or even a "pathological" response to a *concrete* Jewish presence, to Jewish activities, behavior or traditions.

The common denominator in all these societies is of course the impact of the Christian legacy and its translation over centuries into legalized discrimination, Jewish servitude, ghettoization and the narrow economic specialization of Jewry. Even where Jews converted in large num-

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bers, as in late medieval Spain, the descendants of the converts were regarded with hostility and suspicion, leading to the Inquisition and "purity of blood" statutes that pointed the way to modern racial anti-Semitism. Not even the rise of humanism during the Renaissance and Reformation could successfully throw off the impact of the medieval image of the Jew. A reformer like Erasmus never dreamed of applying his humanist teachings on toleration to the Jews, who simply remained beyond the pale as far as he was concerned. Martin Luther, for his part, reiterated all the medieval myths about Jews, reinforcing rather than undermining them with an apocalyptic fury and vehemence all his own. Thus Luther's assault on the Papacy and the whole fabric of the Catholic Church, instead of liberating the Jews made his Protestant followers more suspicious of them. Had they not refused to convert even after the great German Reformer had revealed to them the pure, unadulterated word of God? Were they not secretly encouraging the "Judaizng" Christian sects in Central Europe? Were not the stubborn Jews in league with the Muslim Turks and perhaps even with Rome in seeking to destroy the New Church from within?

If the Reformation failed to bring any diminution of anti-Semitism, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment offered, at least on the face of things, a more promising prospect. There were Enlightenment writers who condemned the persecution of Jews as a way of attacking Christian intolerance. Their anti-clericalism and concern for universal principles of human rights led them to a new conception of the status of the Jews, which found expression in the French Revolution of 1789. The Jews were not to be emancipated as a community but as *individual* human beings, the assumption being that, once oppression was removed, their distinctive group identity would disappear. There was no sympathy among the French revolutionaries for Judaism as such, which was generally viewed in Voltairean terms as a barbarous superstition.

The Enlightenment and the French Revolution demonstrated that anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism did not require a specifically Christian source of inspiration and could even be animated by anti-Christian sentiments. Enlightened Europeans and their radical successors in the nineteenth century, on the left as well as the right, were nevertheless still influenced by Christian stereotypes when they attacked Judaism or denounced the "Jewish" origins of Christianity. Even wholly secularized anti-Semites like Voltaire, Bruno Bauer, Richard Wanger and Eugen Dühring always assumed that Christianity was a superior religion to Judaism and did not hesitate to draw on Christian teachings to reinforce their own cultural or racist perspectives. They inherited the pervasiveness of the Christian antagonism to Jewry while no longer believing in its scheme of salvation, which had still retained an overriding commitment

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to the conversion of the Jews. This development opened up a dangerous situation whose demonic possibilities became fully apparent only with the rise of Nazism. For although Christianity had provided the seedbed on which Nazi racialist doctrines concerning the Jews could flourish, the Church still provided the Jews with an exit. If a Jew converted he was saved. There was no need for the extermination of the Jews because they had their place, even if it was a subordinate and degraded one, in the Christian world-order.

The Nazis took over all the negative anti-Jewish stereotypes in Christianity but they removed the escape clause. There was no longer any way in which even fully assimilated or baptized Jews could flee from the sentence of death which had been passed by the inexorable laws of race. In that sense, the "Final Solution," the purification of a world that was deemed corrupt and evil because of the very existence of the Jews, went beyond even the most radical Christian solution to the "Jewish Question." Hitler and Nazism grew out of a Christian European culture, but that does not mean that Auschwitz was pre-programmed in the logic of Christianity. Indeed, one could argue that the decline of religious belief by removing all moral restraints actually intensified the anti-Semitism which had been incubated for centuries under its protective shield. If anything, this released an even more virulent Germanic strain of the same virus which ultimately turned on Christianity itself as one of the prime symptoms of the so-called "Judaization" of Western civilization.

Anti-semitism did not disappear with the Holocaust any more than it has been eradicated by secular universalist ideologies like Soviet Communism or indeed Zionism, which proposed to "normalize" the Jewish status by creating an independent nation-state in Israel. The image of the Jew as an outsider, a nonconformist, an anomaly and an irritant has survived the rise and fall of the secular ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Anti-Semitism, too, has adapted itself to the post-war situation of Jewry, transformed by the creation of Israel, by the Cold War and by the response of the Arab and Islamic world to the challenge of a non-Muslim, non-Arabic-speaking Jewish state in its midst.

These new factors have, if anything, heightened the usefulness of anti-Semitism as a weapon that can be exploited for the most protean purposes. Fundamentally irrational myths like *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* have found a new lease on life in the post-war era and are still widely believed in the Arab world seventy years after their definitive exposure as a forgery. As Hitler put it in *Mein Kampf* in 1924: "The *Frankfurter Zeitung* repeats again and again that the *Protocols* are forgeries. This alone is evidence of their authenticity." Much the same might be said today by certain Arab nationalists, Islamic fundamentalists, Russian anti-

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Semites or European and American neo-Nazis. A tissue of lies they may be, but in terms of their effect the *Protocols* might just as well have been true. For wherever there is a will to believe, events can be made to fit even into the paranoid vision of the Jewish world conspiracy, with its geopolitical center in Zion and its secret affiliates supposedly operating throughout the globe.

The modern anti-Semitic imagination has been colored for over a century by gloomy, apocalyptic prophecies of the coming victory of the omnipotent Jew. A demonic, mythical creature whose undeviating will to destroy the Gentiles is assumed to lie behind all the negative processes of change and provides a seductively simplistic explanation for a world out of joint – whether it be fear of pollution by alien, "inferior" races; the *angst* provoked by class struggle, ethnic and religious conflict, the leveling tendencies of mass society; the hatred of capitalism or of Communism, of modern urban civilization or of liberal, pluralist democracy; the belief in sinister occult forces (freemasons, Jews, etc.) working to undermine order, hierarchy, authority and tradition; or else the fear of a spiritual vacuum induced by the decline of Christianity or Islam in a world of rapid modernization and social change. The same delirious causality, developed during the Christian Middle Ages, appears to haunt the modern anti-semitic discourse. The principle of evil is not in ourselves. It comes from the outside, from the insidious "other," it is the product of conspiracy and of devilish forces whose incarnation is the mythical Jew.

A century ago, it might have been Edouard Drumont's cryptic formula, "All comes from the Jew, all returns to the Jew," Wilhelm Marr's prophecy of *Finis Germaniae* or Houston Chamberlain's vision of Teutons and Jews locked in a relentless battle of Destiny. Fifty years ago it was Hitler's either-or polarization of the struggle for world hegemony between "Aryans" and "Semites"; followed in 1952 by the dying Stalin's vision of "rootless cosmopolitans" and Jewish "poisoners" in the service of Wall Street capitalism and Western intelligence services (the Doctor's Plot); then came the post-Stalin imagery of the "world Zionist corporation" with its octopus-like tentacles reaching out to subvert the "socialist camp" and forestall Third World national liberation movements; more recently we have seen the efforts of Arab dictators or Islamic theocrats (Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Khomeini, etc.) to unite the Muslim masses against the deadly threat of a Zionist-Imperialist "cancer," said to be threatening to extirpate their existence.

In all these cases we find across the cultural and political divides an astonishingly similar conspiracy theory of history, society and politics, integrated into a closed system of belief and salvationist politics whose es-

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chatological drive is always directed against the Jews. This is a murky apocalyptic fantasy-world, imbued with sadistic visions and colored at times by occult sectarianism, permeated with notions of retributive punishment on a cosmic scale if the implacable enemy is not eradicated in time. Yet this negative millenarianism, with its vision of the satanic, ubiquitous, immoral and all-powerful Jews or scheming Zionists, is often harnessed to a cold, calculating political agenda, turning anti-Semitism into a crucial lever of mass mobilization and totalitarian control. Did not Hitler tell Hermann Rauschning that it was from the *Protocols* that he had learned the methods of "political intrigue, the technique of conspiracy, revolutionary subversion as well as prevarication, deception and organization" ?

Any attempt to analyze the resurgence of anti-Semitism in so many parts of the globe, less than fifty years after the Holocaust, must come to grips with this miasma of nightmarish paranoia, millennial fantasy, homicidal hatred and sheer political cynicism. It must always take into account the special and peculiar Christian hatred of the Jew that ultimately derives from the ambiguous origins of Christianity and it obsession with the non-recognition of the Jewish people of Christ as the true Messiah. It has to take cognizance of the seething hatreds unleashed in a radicalized Islam, not only against Israel and Zionism, but also against Judaism and the Jews, whose history is now being vilified by some Muslims in a fashion previously unknown. It has to deal with the unraveling of the Messianic vision of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe which has generated a revival of "national" and "Christian" values against the intangible cabal of "cosmopolitan" and "godless" conspirators, still allegedly striving for world domination. This free-floating anti-Semitism, for which the actual presence of Jews is almost immaterial, thrives on archetypal fears, anxieties and reflexes that seem to defy any rational analysis.

More alarming still is the advanced state of decay within the Communist heartland of the Soviet Union, where the ground appears to be burning under the feet of the still substantial Jewish minority. Trapped in a crossfire of nationalist hysteria, ethnic conflicts, mass deprivation, and the possibility of civil war as internal centrifugal forces undermine the arthritic colossus of Communist power, Soviet Jewry is fleeing *en masse* to the Jewish homeland of Israel. Not even the Scud missiles of the Iraqi dictator can stay the exodus from the bleak despair of the "socialist" fatherland, to which Soviet Jews had once given their life-blood and intellectual energies.

In the light of these momentous transformations and the continuing threat of anti-Semitism, the historian might well be tempted to question the value of rational analysis and the applicability of the normal tools of

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his trade. Is this phenomenon really susceptible to the rules of logic and historical evidence? Is anti-Semitism ultimately explicable any more than we can explain the mystery of Jewish survival and the tenacious clinging to a vocation and an identity that has exacted so high a price in trials and tribulations over the centuries? Is there really anything new in the endless accusations that have echoed across the centuries from Haman to Hitler? Is there any meaning to be extracted from the myths, the stereotypes, the fantasies and obsessions that have characterized the anti-semitic discourse for more than two millennia? Is there any answer to the agonizing question of why this people has been subjected to such a seemingly unending catalogue of persecution and discrimination?

The historian cannot in my view give any definitive reply to these questions. What he can do is to provide as lucid an account as possible of the path along which different anti-Jewish traditions have been transmitted. He can examine their continuities and metamorphoses according to changing conditions; he must try to illuminate the mechanism and consequences of anti-Semitism in different social, cultural and political contexts. While recognizing the astonishing longevity and persistence of the phenomenon, the similarity and even repetitiveness of much of the anti-semitic discourse, he must also be alive to its adaptability to new circumstances and its constant capacity for renewal. There is no universal key to the understanding of anti-Semitism, nor should it be seen as a completely intractable phenomenon of equal intensity at different times and in different places. The historian may be ultimately unable to explain the "why" of this extraordinarily complex phenomenon, but if he can demonstrate "how" it came to develop into what we are witnessing today, then that, too, is a measure of progress.

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THOMAS NOWOTNY

Public Policy and the Future of Europe

The 1988 World Bank report deals at length with the problem of the public sector, showing that it tends to grown faster than the wealth of nations. In fact, the higher the per capita income, the greater the share of wealth that in one way or another is distributed not according to economic, but according to political criteria. Conservatives are not alone, however, in believing that the public sector works inefficiently, that its costs are less controllable, and that civil servants are not equal to industrial managers in producing goods and services. When comparing, for instance, the cost of bus transportation by public and private carriers, the costs incurred by public carriers are consistently higher. Occasionally the public sector scores better than the private one. The British national health system, for instance, is only half as expensive as the private American one. But it is equally efficient when measured by the "production" of health. Between Britain (with its "socialized medicine") and the United States (with its still largely private system of health care), the average life expectancy does not differ very much. And sometimes even nationalized enterprises are as well run as private ones. Nationalized Renault still produces cars in France, whereas many privately owned British or German automobile producers had to close down. But we assume these cases to be exceptional and are ready to accept the conventional wisdom that private enterprise is more cost-effective.

Nevertheless, the public sector tends to grow, although a few entrenched conservatives might believe its development, with the help of enlightened and hard-headed politics, to be reversible. The Reagan administration, for instance, was rather hard-headed, and yet did not succeed in reversing the trend. In fact, the share of the public sector in the Gross National Product increased further during the Reagan years. How is one to explain this evident connection between the growth of wealth and the growth of the public sector?

According to Marxist rhetoric, the modern "capitalist machine of production" is highly efficient and creates "surplus value" which has to be disposed of. This could be done through various means: through armament or through the export of capital. Might it be that ambitious welfare programs, like the Scandanavian ones, are also but a disposal of surplus value? This explanation is of doubtful use. The public sector cannot be seen as a mere "waste product" of capitalist production – as a

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sector without real function. For purchasing power is not automatically transferred from the private into the public sector. Citizens do not consume public goods, and they do not agree to higher taxes simply for the purpose of keeping the capitalist machine humming. Voters do not easily and automatically yield part of what could be their private consumption to politicians and public administrators. Thus the public sector will grow only if there is a real demand for its growth. In the long run such demand must correspond not to political whim or fashion but to deep and real needs. We may therefore assume that such need exists, that increasing wealth is accompanied by increasing needs for the services provided by the public rather than the private sector of the economy.

The cost of the growing public sector may be viewed either as an increasing burden on the increasingly wealthy nations, or as solidly profitable investments in the economic future. It is of course not possible to distinguish clearly between these two modes of explanation: if a damaged machine needs repair the necessary expenditures might either be considered a waste or an "investment." And the political and ideological conclusion will differ depending upon our preferred explanation. People obviously enjoy being wealthy. The wealthy live longer; they read more; spend more on charity; care more for emotional ties with spouses and children, etc. Thus it is not readily evident that increasing wealth creates social damages that call for ever costlier repairs. The damages caused by the economic machine are not the ones stigmatized by the early Marxists who conceptualized industrial growth at the expense of mass-pauperization. Nonetheless, and while the "old" social questions recede, new ones become ever more intractable: rising unemployment, aggression, suicide, drug addiction: an explosive increase in the number of single parent families. Inequality, too, is again on the increase. Remedies are elusive, and they are costly. In most instances it is the public sector that is called upon to act. In fact, the public sector becomes responsible for things people (for many good reasons) no longer want to be responsible for themselves – such as caring for the aged and toddlers. In addition, costs are directly shifted from the private to the public sector: repairing an environment damaged by industry; retraining workers for new jobs; building roads for privately-produced cars. In this view the public sector would only partly remedy the ills caused by economic modernization, and the costs would be disproportionately high. Such a view induces pessimism not only about the future of "capitalism," but also about the future of "social progress."

In the last analysis so-called progress might turn out to be a mirage – as increasing wealth is balanced by increasing social pathology and by an ever-larger public sector that increasingly burdens the productivity of the private one. Such a pessimistic assessment, however, can present only part

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of the truth. After all, the evident wealth of European countries and of North America cannot be dismissed as merely spurious. Material wealth has produced more than junk, and has brought more than social pathology. After all, people from poor countries like to migrate to wealthy ones. The public does more than repair damages resulting from the characteristics of modern society; its growth is not a burden on productivity but rather a necessary precondition for further sustained economic growth. This observation runs counter to conservative convictions, according to which the public sector, higher taxes, extensive welfare, magnanimous public investment are perceived as a drag on the quasi-natural dynamics of private entrepreneurship. Surprisingly, the left often echoes these sentiments. It too conceptualizes the public sector as something to be wrought free from the private one, as something juxtaposed to the private sectors' principles of efficiency and dynamism. The left does not accept that those activities of the public sector may be solid investments for long-term progress toward higher economic efficiency.

Marx assumed that societies are shaped by the way goods and services are produced. He predicted that a more efficent method of production would substitute itself for a less efficient one, and that the political order would have to reflect the needs of the more efficient mode of production. Marx thus predicted the downfall of capitalism not because of its social injustice but because of its economic inefficiency. And he predicted the victory of "socialism" not because it would be morally superior to "capitalism" but because it would be more productive. Eventually, societies and their politics would be shaped by the new mode of production. What would this new mode of production be? According to Marx it would emerge in the economically advanced countries. Communism as practiced in Eastern Europe eevidently did not propel these states towards economic leadership. Though there were some successes in the early phases of industrialization, communism was incapable of effectively organizing production at a more advanced stage. The United States, Japan, and the Scandinavian and Central European countries, all democracies and "capitalistic," have been more successful, in spite of fundamental differences among them. It is to them we have to look for the emergence of new political systems. Individual efforts are central to the American system; a communal approach to the Japanese. Europe is between these two extremes: the communality exorcised from the realm of direct production is reintroduced by politics. The centrifugal forces set in motion in the private sector are balanced by the centripetal political efforts to maintain solidarity, equity, communality. This "European approach" recently has become less exemplary and enticing. At the core of this unease are doubts about the size, the func-

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tion, and the efficiency of the public sector. The political parties that espoused the growth of the public sector accordingly have been damaged; European social democracy has been pushed into the defensive, not because voters no longer share its goals but because the means employed often proved ineffective: efforts in the public sector did not prevent the rise in unemployment; did not solve housing problems; did not create a more productive and socially just educational system, etc.

Certainly the reasons for this failure are complex, and often not even properly understood. And while voters might accept failure where the proper remedies remain obscure, and for instance in the fight against criminality, they will not accept flagrant shortcomings. If performance in the private sector is blatantly superior, they will expect it everywhere.There are, for example, no convincing justifications for the fact that transportation by public buses may cost three times as much as by private ones. But the higher cost of publicly produced goods is only part of the problem: the average citizen experiences the private sector not only as more cost-efficient, but also as more responsive to his needs. Supply of public services is inelastic. On Saturdays, one may, for instance, go shopping but one cannot talk to a tax officer, or obtain a copy of a birth certificate. Big organizations are not flexible, efficient, or easily adjustable. It left to their own instincts they become even more rigid and inefficient – in both the public and private sector. But the latter risks economic failure while there is no comparable risk on the public sector. It operates less in response to demand and more according to the internal mechanism of large bureaucratic organizations.

The political problem for European social democracy arose from its identification with these bureaucracies in the public sector. Social democrats were perceived to represent not the "masses" or the consumers of public services but the interest of those who provided the services. Instead of representing the public's need for mass transportation, they were suspected of representing the interest of railroad employees; instead of the need for humane and broad education, those of teachers. The composition of the upper echelons of the social democratic parties tends to confirm that civil servants, teachers and university dons, social workers and railroad workers, and trade union officials, are overly represented. That brings us back to the long-term and Marxist aspects of our question. Whatever socio-economic system will arise after capitalism in Europe, it will arise only as a consequence of further economic development. The American option of growth – with a minimal public sector – is not open to Europe. Thus growth will take place only if the public sector will grow in lock-step with the private one. But that can happen only if it becomes more efficient, less costly, and more responsive to the public – that is, more democratic. That is both a political and an

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economic imperative.

This assertion runs counter to conservative dogmas which, however, have been disproven. Public and private wealth is not mutually exclusive. Everywhere the economic expansion has been accompanied by an even more rapid expansion of the public sector. In Europe between 1955 and 1975 its share of the GNP has risen particularly fast whenever the European economies were booming, and – as demonstrated by World Bank statistics – the share of the public sector is particularly high in the wealthiest countries. But one could argue that the times of dynamic expansion of the public sector are over, that existing demand has been met, and that in the coming years the private sector will or should expand more rapidly. However, as incomes grow, demand will most probably continue to shift to goods that have generally and historically – at least in Europe – been provided by the public sector: health, welfare services, old-age pensions, education, clean and pleasant environment, and so on. Economic growth would slacken if this potential demand were not met. Also, there is yet a more direct link between the public sector and economic growth. The goods and services produced by the public sector are not merely consumer products: they are essential to the productive process, the more so the more modern the economy. Information, for instance, is very often said to have become the more important "raw material." Some claim that we have entered the new "information age." In any event, information doubtlessly has become central to all productive processes, and governments have been deeply involved in the production, reproduction, and distribution of information: kindergartens and universities, libraries and research institutions are mostly funded not by the private but by the public sector.

The recent fashion for the "Japanese" type of management has highlighted another essential factor of production: cooperative and positive attitudes in the work force. Part of this attitude might be culturally conditioned, but in the long run will be directed by politics. In Europe, it is up to the government to bring about a more egalitarian society, a coherent public culture overarching the various economic and social groups; a dignified existence for all the employed and the unemployed. In absence of such policies nations will be divided by violent schisms with high tensions and mutual antagonisms. In such a state they cannot provide what is required if growth is to continue: the coherence and mutual solidarity the "modern" economy needs in a "participatory" production process.

The further expansion of the public sector thus would seem necessary but has run into public resistance. This resistance does not imply a repudiation of goals of the public sector, but reflects the impatience, disillusion, and skepticism concerning its actual workings. Voters, though

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wanting to receive certain goods via the political process, often have found them either outlandishly expensive, inferior, or both. Further economic – and with it societal – progress will thus depend on whether or not this resistance can be overcome. Thus, those interested in progress and change, the reformist and left parties in Europe, must support this political goal. Public relations and propaganda cannot break that resistance, if only because up until now, the public sector has been statist and autocratic, and public servants have behaved like rulers dealing with subjects. This style does not correspond to the new social reality, where subjective elements like emotions and perceptions are increasingly dominant; and where individuality and self-expression are increasingly accepted. The private economy has done so; civil servants have not. It might also be useful to leave more of the public services to some sort of markets. Market competition tends to keep politics and political elites flexible and attentive to shifting "demands." The best of political parties would have become the worst had it been permitted what public bureaucracies have been permitted to do – namely to rule unchallenged for several generations. Why not expand what is the rule in politics to the public sector? Why not introduce competition for the "customers" and corresponding penalties for those who fail in that competition? Joseph Schumpeter spoke of "creative destruction" wrought by competition. This is the source of progress in the private sector. Public institutions too should be allowed to fail; they might be forced into failure if they do not efficiently meet certain societal goals.

There are two visions of such a market in the public realm. One would permit the wealthy to purchase what they want, and would leave the less wealthy without vote. This kind of market for public services of course would be unacceptable. The other one would allocate the same "purchasing power" to every citizen in order to influence the behavior of the "competitors." In this market, citizens would be given the chance to "shop around." This would not only keep the public institutions on the watch for fear of losing customers but would provide also an extension of democratic rights through increased possibilities to choose among options. In Austria, for instance, everyone is granted a certain pension as if by governmental decree. What if the prospective pensioner were allowed to choose between a lower pension at an earlier age or a higher one later on in his or her life or to choose among various other public sector pension schemes? One could also proceed further by establishing a sector that is neither strictly "private" nor strictly "public." It is claimed that such an autonomous sector already exists. Activities in that sector are stimulated by "mixed motives" – motives that are neither clearly "political" nor clearly "private" and narrowly "economic," but allow for maximizing material payoffs. Voluntary fire brigades in Austria, for

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instance, at market prices would cost several times the amount spent for military defense. In theory at least, the "autonomous sector" has two advantages over the public and the private one: closeness to the persons most concerned and lower costs. At present, for example, toddlers are cared for either at home at parents' expense or at a day care center at government's expense. A mother who stays at home now might decide to care not only for her own but also for two more small children. Were she to be paid, the costs incurred by the public are much lower than if the two small children were being sent to a public day care center.

European social democracies must develop such concepts for the public sector. In doing so they would demonstrate their emancipation from the pressure groups they have been prey to and that stand for feudal ossification and narrow self-interest. Without such perspectives, the public sector is bound to stagnate, and European societies along with it. If these suggestions are heeded, the emerging societies would be less hierarchical, more egalitarian, freer, and at the same time more communal. A larger share of wealth would be distributed not according to economic but according to political principles. What to call such societies is an open question. They certainly no longer would be purely "capitalistic."

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FICTION

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

Algie

It was a breathless night in the spring of 1970. The air was heavy with anxious memories and things to come. The small Connecticut town close to the border of New York was asleep. The only sounds were the whirring chorus of air conditioners and the intermittent barking of a dog far away, piercing the night as though it came from a distant radio transmitter.

Suddenly there was a crashing noise, coming in waves as if a house was being blown up. Nothing like this had ever been heard in a slumbering town accustomed to going to sleep and getting up without any disturbance. People jumped out of bed. Could it have been an air raid: the question stirred the minds of the half-awake. No, who would bomb this peaceful town, except a madman? In a few minutes, fire and police sirens began to screech.

By morning it became known that a Ford truck had blown up and the body of a man, dissevered and mangled, probably in his fifties, was found twenty feet from the wreckage. Both of his legs had been blown off, one was under his body, another twenty feet away. He had been unconscious but still breathing heavily when the police arrived.

The New York Times carried a three-paragraph story on page six the next morning. A police investigation, by the town's twenty-man police force, was begun. But it was beyond the capabilities of the local police, trained to handle drunks, traffic violations, and petty burglaries. They had no clues and no means of finding any to the identity of the dead man and the mission of the small red pick-up truck. All they could find were the remnants of unexploded bombs, of unknown make and source.

After a few days of unprofitable speculation, the state police and the FBI were called in. Soon it became clear that the accident, if it was an accident, was too mysterious for even the state police, and the FBI took over.

As everyone knows, the FBI is nothing if not methodical. Its investigations move slowly, step by step, from one person to another, one fact to the next, interpreted by a procession of guesses.

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FBI men Lloyd Robins and John Hastings arrived and began to interview residents in the vicinity of the accident. Both men looked as though they easily could be forgotten. Robins was thin and wiry, about five foot nine, with graying black hair and a mustache trimmed to look like a toothbrush. His skin was dark and blotchy. Hastings was a little taller and a little huskier than Robins, with kinky brown hair. He moved quickly and nervously, and carried himself with an air that was both modest and self-confident. Both had the lightfootedness of men who kept themselves physically fit. Robins pumped iron; Hastings played squash. Robins had three children, two boys and a girl. Hastings felt marriage meant a loss of freedom.

No one they spoke to in the neighborhood knew anything of value in solving the case. But Robins and Hastings found their first clue when they discovered that the truck had been rented, and after calling car rental companies in Manhattan, they learned that it had been rented by a Donald Somers. But who was Donald Somers? He had no papers to identify him. It took a month of tireless pursuit of one clue after another, such as tracing what was left of the clothing of Donald Somers, which came from expensive stores, and checking his dental work, which experts said was superb, to find out that Donald Somers was Alfred Gianelli, an Italian Communist who had become an American citizen and had been associated with the Communist Party here under the name of Donald Somers. He had started a small publishing house in New York, World Wide Books, and because of his European origins and contacts, and because he was at home in several European languages, he published a number of foreign writers. But there was something strange about Gianelli's politics, as the FBI men learned, in that while he was a seemingly loyal and committed Communist, he published writers, including some Russian dissidents, who were critical of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party. He also published some pamphlets put out by anarchist and terrorist groups. Neither Robins nor Hastings could understand this apparent contradiction. They could grasp someone's being a double agent. But a double thinker was outside their field. Had their field been wider, they would have said he was an intellectual, since intellectuals are known to double and even triple think.

But what was Gianelli doing with a truck and a bomb? Robins and Hastings began a patient and drawn-out questioning of anyone who might have known Gianelli. He lived in a brownstone on West Eleventh Street. His landlady was an elderly widow who could testify to little more than that he paid his rent on time. Neighbors knew only that Gianelli was a short, stocky man who had a slight stammer and hiccupped frequently. They all said he was very polite, with a European courtliness, but impatient. They noticed that he had very few visitors. Occasionally a

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few trim-looking women in their thirties, exuding propriety, and some long-haired young men would come late in the afternoon. They had the brisk but hesitant appearance of employees, probably from Gianelli's publishing house. A woman who lived on the floor below, who insisted that she always minded her own business, said that she had seen a blonde woman, probably in her twenties, quite bosomy but chicly dressed, several times in the evening. The foreign-looking visitor had a nervous walk, like a tic, she added. Robins and Hastings decided, at least for the time being, that there wasn't much to go on here.

In the meantime, the Bureau, as the FBI is familiarly known, was in touch with the Italian interior police, which had a long file on Gianelli. He was a member of a wealthy and prominent Italian family with large banking and industrial interests, and had himself set up a publishing house that had strong international connections, particularly with the Soviet Union and the East European Communist countries, which he visited frequently. But as was not uncommon in rich Italian families, especially aristocratic ones with old money, Gianelli was the black sheep, the radical who went in for revolutionary causes and movements. As a boy, he had been moody and obstinate. At the age of twenty, Gianelli became a Communist, but not a passive one, like other rich young men who had nothing to do. He became an activist. He plunged into the vast network of Communist activities with a desperate finality, putting his mind, his money, and his body into the vanguard of the "revolution." But he soon tired of the legal work of the Party, of what went on on the political surface. He began to be drawn to the illegal, underground groups, attached to the Communists but partially independent, with close connections to the KGB, who believed in more direct action. Soon, however, he gravitated toward independent terrorist groups who collaborated not only with the unofficial sections of the official Communists but with a number of revolutionary sects and even with right-wing terrorists.

Nothing was dangerous enough for Algie, as he became known in the terrorist underground, though some of the radical terrorists, who regarded him as a political slummer, called him the Cow because he was milked so often. He funded the toughest German and Italian ultra-Red gangs and became a friend of the most notorious hit men. One of his closest friends was Arbuto, the famous Arab terrorist. Algie was jailed a few times, but the charges were always vague and unproven. His name appeared in newspaper accounts of bombings and assassinations, but usually as someone with remote connections to the petty conspirators who had been arrested or were still being hunted by the police. It was not clear whether he was protected by his wealth or whether he was too cautious or too shrewd to be in on the actual bombings or shootings.

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Little was known about his personal life or habits. He was said to have an obsessive sense of privacy, and an almost paranoid need for secrecy. But there were newspaper clippings about three short-lived marriages, one annulled because it had not been consummated. Another left him with a daughter, brought up by her grandparents, who went to exclusive schools and married an executive of the Fiat Company. The last marriage, according to several newspaper stories, was to a young, wild-looking blonde, an adventuress who, like Algie, had strayed from a wealthy bourgeois family of doctors and lawyers.

This information led the Bureau to the American Communists. Robins and Hastings made a routine visit to Communist headquarters in an old high-rise on Twelfth Street, with a bookstore on the street level that featured Marxist books and had overblown pictures of Marx and Lenin on one shabby pink wall, and smaller photos of Castro and Che Guevera. They flashed the badges they kept in an inside pocket and said they wanted to see an officer of the party. They were directed to a freight elevator to take them to the ninth floor, the famous floor of the Party officials. Going by past experience, they did not expect to get much information from the Party, but routine procedures had to be followed. A big black man who looked like an overweight football lineman showed them into a large, shabby room, with a scratched-up oak desk and four old plastic chairs, strewn with papers and books. In a white bookcase on one wall, they noticed some titles with the words "revolution" and "working class."

Robins and Hastings flashed their cards again, and Hastings asked the skinny man behind the desk, about thirty with thick glasses, what his name was.

"Harry Raymond," he said.

An assumed name, thought Robins.

"Sit down. What can I do for you? You know, " he added, "we don't have any dealings with the FBI."

"We're investigating a man by the name of Alfred Gianelli, who was killed when a bomb exploded in a truck he was driving. We understand he was a member of the Communist Party under the name of Donald Somers and his publishing house printed Communist books."

"I don't know him personally," said Raymond. "Besides, we don't give out any information about membership in the Party."

"This is a criminal investigation," said Robins. "He was carrying bombs. It could be an act of terrorism, and you could be involved."

"I said I had nothing to do with Gianelli, and we have nothing to do with terrorism. You know Marx and Lenin opposed individual acts of terrorism like murder or assassination. You can read that for yourself. Do you want some literature on the subject of terrorism? Anarchists ad-

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vocate individual acts."

"Never mind," said Hastings, as they got up to go. "We may be back."

For the time being, Robins and Hastings decided they could get nothing more from the Communists. The next hunting ground was Gianelli's publishing house, World Wide Books, on the ground floor of an old brownstone on West Twelfth street. They were ushered into a cluttered office by a thin, slightly stooped, middle-aged man who said his name was Baskin, Pierre Baskin. He had a faint foreign accent that sounded like a blend of several languages.

"What can I do for you? We are in a state of chaos. All operations have been suspended."

"We're from the FBI. So you know about Gianelli's death. We have a few questions to ask you."

"I don't know much about Gianelli. I was the office manager. How was he killed?"

"We're here to ask questions not to answer them. Tell us what you know. What were his relations with the Communists?"

"I think he had business dealings with them. He went on business trips to the Soviet Union. He seemed to be sympathetic, but he also seemed critical."

"How did he get the manuscript he published by the dissident, Borisovich?"

"I don't know. He kept those things to himself."

From the files of the CIA, Robins and Hastings had already found out that Gianelli had smuggled the manuscript out of Russia.

"Did he have any close friends, any women friends?"

"There was this woman, I think his wife. That's her picture," he said, pointing to the wall.

There was a painting of a woman, probably in her twenties, with wild, blonde hair, and staring eyes, with the name 'Toni' in the right-hand bottom corner. Robins and Hastings got up and walked over to the painting to examine it more closely.

"Where is she?" asked Hastings.

"I don't know, but somebody said she's coming here to look at the business."

"Is there anyone else?"

"He also seemed to have a regular appointment every day at four o'clock. Somebody said it must have been with a doctor or an analyst. I heard, I forget how, it was a woman."

"Did he have an appointment book? Could we see it?"

"He kept all those things to himself. But if he had an appointment book, it would be locked up in his desk. I don't have a key."

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Robins took a set of instruments from a side pocket, walked over to the large antique mahogany desk, probably from Paris, and went to work opening the drawers.

"Here it is," said Hastings, who had been rummaging in the opened drawers.

Robins and Hastings took the red leather appointment book to FBI headquarters where they studied it. Some were obviously business appointments. And the names were first names, ostensibly to avoid identification. There was one entry every day at four with a Doctor L. But who was Doctor L?

The next step was tedious but one the FBI was accustomed to. They looked through the yellow pages of the telephone book for all the physicians whose names began with "L" and had a woman's first name. For those without a first name, they cross-checked with a list of doctors they got from the AMA and a list of psychoanalysts they got from the New York Psychoanalytic Association. They went through the list of analysts, following the clue of the office manager at World Wide Books. A secretary spent two days on the phone before she found a Doctor Lazarstein on Central Park West who said she had been seeing Gianelli for several years.

Robins and Hastings made an appointment and went to see Doctor Lazarstein one morning at nine o'clock. She led them into a sparsely furnished office. A well-worn, unobtrusive desk faced the window. Behind it was an old wooden desk chair with a flowered pillow on the seat. Next to it was an overstuffed easy chair, covered by a Mexican throw, probably, they thought, to hide some torn spots. On the opposite wall was a very plain cot covered by an Indian print. Behind the head of the cot was another easy chair where Doctor Lazarstein sat when her patients lay on the cot. Doctor Lazarstein pointed to the cot for Robins and Hastings to sit on, and she sat in the easy chair facing them

"What can I do for you?" she asked.

"We want to ask you some questions about Alfred Gianelli. You said he had been a patient of yours."

"It depends on what you want to know," she said. "You know that the relation of patient to doctor is privileged, so what I can tell you is limited."

"You know how he died?"

"Yes. I read it in *The Times*."

"You have to answer our questions. This is a criminal investigation. If you don't cooperate, you'll be subpoenaed."

"All right. Let's try. But even if I'm subpoenaed, I may have to withold some information because of the inviolability of the doctor-patient relationship."

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"Did you know he was a Communist?"

"I'd rather not answer."

"You'll have to answer later. You might as well answer now."

"He was sympathetic to the Communists. He did business with them. But I don't think he was a member. We didn't discuss politics. You know politics is not what he came for."

"What did he come for?"

"That's a private matter. It had nothing to do with his politics, with the accident."

"How do you know? That's for us to decide. Did he ever talk about terrorism, about bombing?"

"No, never."

Hastings couldn't control his impatience. He got up, went over to the window, and while ostensibly looking out, asked: "What was Gianelli like? How would you describe him, the kind of person he was? Was he violent? What did he look like?"

"He was not a violent man. At least he didn't act violently or talk about violence. He was fairly short, about five six, I'd say, sort of round. His face was ruddy and he had a trim -is that what you call it? - moustache. He liked to eat well, that was one of his problems. In general he liked to live well. But he also ran himself ragged. At times he was frantic. You know he came from a well-to-do family, upper-middle-class. He was a real cosmopolitan."

"What about close friends? A woman he might have been intimate with, he might have confided in?"

"He sometimes mentioned his wife, his third wife, I think. But he was what you would call a loner. He funneled his energies into his work. He worked sixteen hours a day. He had trouble sleeping."

"Is that why he came to you?"

"It was one of the reasons."

"Tell us the other reasons. It might throw some light on the way he died. Was he suicidal?"

"Not really, though he suffered from severe depressions. He was very unhappy, but it was masked by his throwing himself into his work. We call that sublimation."

Hastings got up again and asked impatiently: "But why did he carry a bomb in his pickup truck and get himself killed by the explosion?"

"I don't know. Clinical analysis does not always explain specific acts, particularly such extreme and bizarre acts."

"But you must have some theories, some hunches."

"I would be going beyond my role as a therapist. I would be indulging in unbridled speculations, in what we call wild analysis."

"Try it out on us. This is not a scientific meeting. We are detectives,

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that is, ordinary people looking for extraordinary clues. We follow any lead, all the way, however unscientific or wild, even if it seems totally irrelevant. If you told us more about his problems, his reasons for coming to you, we might have some leads, some connections, even if you don't think there are any."

"You know, Freud thought that not everything was determined. Some things come about as people struggle with their neuroses. Only in retrospect does everything in a person's life appear to have clear causes and origins. This is the fallacy of retroactive analysis. That's what's wrong with many biographies of famous people, especially dead ones. Neat patterns of behavior are invented."

Hastings walked over to a small bookcase and looked abstractedly at the books.

"We are not interested," said Robins, who began to grind his teeth, "in Freud or psychoanalysis or all your theories. We're here to investigate a criminal act, to find some clues to the reason why Gianelli was carrying explosives in a pickup truck, where he was going, and why they exploded, killing him."

"I keep telling you, I don't know. We didn't discuss such things. That's not what he was here for. Actually, our sessions were more of what is called therapy than strict psychoanalysis. Do you know the difference? Analysis is deeper, more far-ranging, more inclusive. In therapy, we examine immediate problems and, of course, what the patient wants to talk about. It's more superficial, but it helps people with specific problems."

Robins shook his head, and seemingly talking into the air, said impatiently: "We're not interested in all this intellectual stuff. If you would only tell us more of what you know about Gianelli, we could do without all this fancy talk and get on with our business. You mean to tell us that you never heard about his communist activities and about all the stories of his contacts with terrorists?"

"To tell the truth, I did hear something about these things. Gianelli said at the beginning that he was on the left and that he had engaged in politics. But he said he did not want to talk about it. He kept insisting that this was not what he came to me for, that he had some personal problems, which he didn't think could be solved completely by me but maybe he could manage to live with them better. When he first came here for, as I say, therapy, he was in a deep, almost paralyzing depression. But then he became manic, and I was afraid he would do something violent to get out of it, though, as I said, I didn't think he was a violent man. He talked about direct action, but I didn't know what he meant. He mumbled something one session about having seen a number of famous doctors, but none could help him."

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"For Christ's sake, stop beating around the bush. Just tell us what bothered him, what he came to see you about. You know, when you are subpoenaed and put on the stand, you will have to tell the judge and the whole court. Use your common sense and get off the hook by telling us now."

"Well, I guess the record will show that I did all I could to keep the relation of patient to doctor privileged. Information was forced out of me by legal pressures. My colleagues will understand, I hope; no, I'm sure."

"Well, we're waiting."

"Okay. Gianelli was born with a shriveled penis. He could not engage in easy, what is considered normal, sexual relations, though there are some schools of analysis that challenge the traditional concepts of normality. He couldn't have stable relations with women, and of course his marriages couldn't last. I couldn't make the speculative connections with his other activities. It wouldn't be professional. But I suppose that is what you have in mind."

Hastings looked up at the ceiling, then turned to Dr. Lazarstein. "For God's sake," he said, "Is this what you were keeping from us? What the hell were you afraid of?"

"It's not the importance of the material. As I keep saying, it's the doctor-patient relation."

"Didn't it occur to you that this trivial information is useless? What does it tell us about the reason he drove to Connecticut one night with explosives in a pickup truck? You could have saved a lot of time and fancy talk if you had told us this personal bit of biology at the beginning. Anyway, thank you for your time and for your final cooperation."

Robins and Hastings got up, stretched their legs unobtrusively, and walked to the door.

When they got outside, they asked each other what they knew now about the crime, or, more exactly, about the intended crime.

"Well, what do we know?" asked Robins again, as they reached the offices of the Bureau.

"A strange case," said Hastings.

"Is this what psychoanalysts do?" asked Robins, as though he were talking to himself.

The next day Hastings said to Robins, "Let's check whether Toni is here."

That afternoon, Robins and Hastings dropped in on World Wide Books.

They showed their badges as they entered and asked for Baskin. They were told by a secretary that Baskin was out, but Toni Renaldo was here.

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"Do you want to see her?" she asked.

They were directed to Gianelli's office, a large, odd-shaped, modernly-furnished room. A woman in her late twenties, with frizzy, untamed blonde hair, seated behind Gianelli's desk, pointed to two shiny chrome chairs.

"You're Toni, Gianelli's wife," said Robins. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm looking over the business. Maybe I'll take it over for a while," she said in stilted English, with a strong Italian accent.

"We came to talk to you about Gianelli, Algie, as you called him. We're investigating the explosion that killed him. It is a criminal investigation because he was carrying bombs illegally. Tell us everything you know."

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything about his politics, his personal life, anything that will throw some light on why he was carrying explosives."

"We don't discuss politics with the police. But I don't mind telling you about him personally."

"We don't care about his personal life, only if it tells us something that might help clear up the night in Connecticut. What was Gianelli doing with explosives? Where was he going?"

"I can't tell you. Truly, I don't know. I said I don't talk to the police about politics. But if you want to know about Gianelli, I've written a little book. It's the story of myself, and Algie is in it. It's in Italian. I've got a copy here."

"Could you let us have it? We can get it translated."

"Here," she said, as she went to a bookshelf and handed them a slim paperback with the Italian title, *La Vita con Politica*.

"Thank you," said Hastings. "If we have any questions we'll be back."

The little book was sent to Washington to have the section on Gianelli translated. A week later the translation arrived. Since the Bureau is not in the foreign translation business, the English version was literal and simple. But the Italian was probably equally simple and matter-of-fact. It was xeroxed and Robins and Hastings sat down to read the part on Gianelli. It was called *Life with the Sacred Cow*, and the title of the book translated into English became *Life With Politics*.

The selection on Gianelli began with Toni's meeting him at the home of Arbuto, the international terrorist:

Arbuto introduced me to Algie in a safe house in a fashionable neighborhood in Rome. I could see that Algie was nervous. He tried to talk tough, like a worker, a man of action. But you could tell he was

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soft underneath. He was short and finicky. He looked too clean, as if he was scrubbed by his mother. The fact he was born and brought up as an aristocrat was written all over him. He must have been pampered and groomed to look like a dandy.

Arbuto, who was always looking for recruits to the movement, wanted me to meet him because he was enormously rich and knew important people. He thought he could help us, but I wondered how – besides money. It struck me right away that he was an incurable romantic. He had the eager eyes of a child, looking for a new toy. Arbuto said he was always looking for something new.

When Algie was twenty, he became a communist. But, for him, the communists, the Italian ones, were too cautious, too scared to take chances. They were like his father, he said, too practical. He didn't think they were revolutionary. He began to look for more excitement. He found Arbuto.

I found him attractive, I don't know why. Maybe because women like men who have something wrong with them, men they can rescue. And I sensed immediately that he was looking for help. I guess he liked me because I was new and promised something different. Maybe in some mysterious way I could supply what his life lacked. He told me I was like a combination of Passionara and Mata Hari, which pleased me, and like his mother, which didn't please me, and which, I suspected, he didn't care for either.

We made a number of dates, eating in posh restaurants, and going on picnics in the mountains, and to small, secret political meetings, which excited him so much that his legs were twitching. Then, one day, while we were having lunch in a garden restaurant, with a fountain in the center, and a violinist serenading us, Algie said, "Let's get married."

"It's a crazy idea," I said, though I too was carried away by the elegant atmosphere, "but why not, if it doesn't work what have we lost?"

We were married by a radical priest in Arbuto's safe house, and we went on a political honeymoon to the Hotel Praha in Prague, where I always had felt at home.

When we got to our room, he was fidgety and sweating. I was so nervous I felt dizzy. Algie ordered a bottle of Russian vodka. I wondered why two people who weren't afraid to die were so scared.

I knew why I was scared. But why was he scared? We sat down on the bed next to each other. He kissed me on the cheek but immediately pulled back, looking to see what I would do. I did nothing. He started to fidget with his fly. He had trouble opening it. I couldn't wait any more. I had to tell him the truth about myself, that I was a lesbian. I had been taught to lie to the police but to tell the truth to each other. Just to look at a penis, especially an erect one, I told him, made me sick. But

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I said I would try. I did like him. Women are not like men, they have to like a man. Then he began to cry. I tightened up. I couldn't stand seeing a fifty-year-old man crying, especially one who had given his life to the revolution.

He said he had something so terrible to tell me he could hardly talk about it, in fact very few people knew it. He said in a low, quivering voice that he had been born a cripple. He had a shrivelled penis. He said he might not be able to get an erection. But we could, he said faintly, do other things.

He lifted my dress and his sweaty hand crawled up my thigh. He took out his sad, little penis and played with it with his other hand. His hands shook. I couldn't look, but out of the corner of my eye saw that he couldn't get an erection. I turned away and began to shiver. I tried again to look. But I felt nauseous. I thought that a shrivelled penis made me sicker than a whole one. But I couldn't say so. I felt sorry for Algie. I almost forgot my own troubles. His seemed worse than mine, for he had to face mine too. It was too much.

We gave up. He buttoned his fly. I fixed my dress. He took a big swig of vodka and gave me the bottle. I took a long drink.

After a while, we tried to forget what happened. I said we could be friends and work together. Political people, I said, have to put the past behind them. He nodded his head like an obedient child. I said we could stay married. It was easier that way, why bother to explain. At that moment I don't believe I was thinking of the advantages of being married to Algie. But Arbuto said I had a practical head on my shoulders.

I continued to see Algie at special meetings, and we often had dinner or lunch at his favorite posh cafés. It was like old times. But I began to notice that he was starting to fall apart, and for the first time in my life I felt guilty. It was a strange feeling. I thought that maybe I could have done more for Algie. He dressed like a worker on vacation, with sporty shirts and tight pants. He had a far-off, frantic look in his eyes. I heard he was running around, looking for political action. Arbuto said he was cooking up crazy schemes, which he had difficulty in talking him out of. Nobody listened to him, but they all took his money, which he was pouring out like water. One day Arbuto and I had lunch with him to set him straight. We tried to tell him that to work in the movement he had to be more disciplined. In fact he would endanger the movement if he didn't stick to orders from Arbuto. We said he might even stay out of politics for a year. But he wasn't listening.

Finally, Arbuto had an inspiration. We had dinner with him in a small, quiet restaurant, and Arbuto said to Algie: "We have something in mind for the movement that only you could do. Why don't you start a publishing house in New York. You could spread our ideas in America.

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What do you say?"

"Well," said Hastings, leaning back in his chair and flopping his legs on the desk, "what do we know now?"

"He sure was a screwball," said Robins. "The world is full of screwballs. There's probably not enough doctors for them. You think they ever get better? How many, you think, are born like him?"

"What do we do now?" said Hastings.

"Lets go back to talk to Toni," said Robins. "I don't think she'll tell us much, maybe she doesn't know any more than we do. She was his wife for two days."

Robins and Hastings phoned Toni and dropped in to see her the next day.

"Well," said Robins, "we've read your story, which reads like a story in True Confessions. But we still don't know what Gianelli was doing with explosives that night in Connecticut."

Toni was less hostile but not more cooperative.

"What else can I tell you?" she said. "Algie was not made for his life. He should have stuck to the life he was born into. He could have been a respectable publisher. He should have stayed out of politics. He might not have been happier, but he would have been alive. But who knows, I'm not a psychologist."

"Neither are we," said Hastings, "I guess we'll never know," as they left World Wide Books.

It was said that Hoover himself was interested in the case, But Robins and Hastings did not discuss it with him. And three months after the explosion that disrupted the peaceful Connecticut town the case was declared closed.

Though the FBI knew less about Gianelli than the Italian police, it made the fraternal gesture of sending its file to Rome, marked "case unsolved, probably psychological, not political."

In the meantime, Toni and Arbuto arranged to have Gianelli's severed body flown to Moscow. According to a will made out by Gianelli shortly before he died, in addition to leaving the publishing house and a considerable sum of money to Toni, he specified that he wanted to be buried in the Soviet Union, the land where one was given a glimpse of the future, next to the body of John Reed. Sufficient funds were provided for the flight to Moscow by a chartered plane.

An obscure Russian paper, that was said to reflect the opinions of the KGB, briefly reported the burial of Gianelli, and a prominent KGB official was quoted as saying that Gianelli lived and died for the Revolution.

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ISE BALÁSZ-RÁKÓCZY

Psychoanalytic Diaries

Introduction

During the period between the wars, the center of psychoanalysis – its true heart – shifted from Vienna to Budapest. There, Sándor Ferenczi, Freud's sometime disciple, became its undisputed leader. In the years before he died this brave, inventive man risked a bold experiment. To counter the effects of his hidden weakness, and also to reveal it, he sometimes put himself on the couch and the patient in his own, upright chair. By this means he hoped to avert a common and crippling misbelief: that a person's failure to be loved in childhood arose from his own, and not his parents', limitations.

Some of the analysands he'd treated in this way went on to establish practices of their own, and some of theirs went on to do the same, so that there developed in that city a culture of irregularly trained practitioners, working by a variety of unorthodox means. Among them was my grandmother's dear friend, Ise.

At the same time that Ise began her work (around 1935) she also began to keep a journal. It was with this precious journal, and aided by her jewels, that she fled from Hungary in 1944 after it was overrun by German troops. Ise came from an ancient family, of which several ancestors had made investments abroad through banks in Zürich and Chicago. One of them had even acquired a sheep ranch in Montana – thousands of acres of land– very beautiful and untamed but wild. It was there that Ise came to settle.

Twelve years afterward she sent my grandmother a packet containing the journals and with them a letter, which I shall later give in full. In it she wrote, "After a lifetime of living in the past, I am finally and fully in the present. For years this journal has been my chief companion. Now that endless self-communion weighs me down."

After my grandmother's death, Ise's papers came into my hands. (She had long since died and I, coincidentally, had become an analyst too.) Immediately I recognized their value. Not only for capturing a certain moment in the history of this field, but also for revealing a remarkable quality of mind. That mind is inseparable from her birthright. In possession of his name, which alone confers value, the aristocrat is free to pursue his desire. It is her long-delayed grasp upon that freedom which

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constitutes the soul of Ise's story.

When I decided to translate and publish the extracts that follow, I sought out Ise's relations. Only one of her sons was alive, retired to Corfu, and if not for the need to preserve anonymity, I would happily thank him here, both for his generosity and for his kind permission to publish his mother's work.

Stephen Kurtz

1. Count R. had a long, thin prick like a stylus. When we *fucked* [in English] it was as if he were incising the same lines over and over in a language I did not know. Not that it was a poetic language like Rilke's Samenworte – merely a strange one like Catalan or Welsh. The handsome painter Z. was courting me at that same time. Why did I refuse him? Was it really to explore the values of boredom? Or was I waiting (it was a state of waiting), as R. went on scribbling his tedious text, for some moment when the Word would explode upon me; when that merely foreign drivel would become the outpouring of a. . . .

Why have I written this? I think of that terrifying tale of Kafka's in which a condemned man's sentence is inscribed upon his body over and over with a monstrous instrument – an instrument that eventually kills him. Torture horrifies me, although they do say I've torturers in my blood. Yet it's not blood itself that disturbs me so much as the idea of the inescapable: that whether through inheritance or first experience, a sentence is passed that must be carried out. The promise of psychoanalysis is that the chains of fate will be broken. But I wonder, could that be an illusion? Might we, in the very process of becoming conscious, simply be following the line of fate in an alternative direction?

It is also true, I think, that I loved R., and that I proved my love by bearing with the boredom he invariably produced. I remember when my youngest son was two. He had a little horse on wheels we used to roll back and forth on the nursery floor, back and forth between us. Something about that repetition was important to him – fascinating or comforting. It drove me mad. I could easily have left him in the care of his nurse, but I forced myself to stay. It was a sacrifice, but not a *self*-sacrifice. There is a difference.

2. S. bores me too. So much of doing analysis is boring so long as the patient withholds his love. That seems horribly selfish and, of course, it is. But to withhold one's love is to withhold one's secret self, and since

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that is the one who bears the wounds, how can anything happen? So I sit there in my corner, smoking. Thank God for cigarettes! And for my room, my beautiful room in which I fold myself as in an old embroidered shawl.

3. L. says my room's too cluttered – that it's more like a warehouse than an office. But I love it.When I shut that door behind me I feel I enter into myself. And at the same time, I enter into my childhood – the best part of it – hiding in that room in an unused wing, full of ancient bric-a-brac. My parents' rooms were terribly bare. They tried to pretend the past didn't exist, so they had its artifacts – its memories – banished to that distant place. And there I made my nest. Oh the daydreams!, the stories I told myself! And they could not touch me.

Not that anyone was ever cruel – in the usual sense, at least. Mother was almost too affectionate. Nevertheless, I was alone. Two things, I think, kept me going. First, that glorious room full of things: gilded throne-like chairs from the time of Francis Rákóczy, Spanish *varagueñas,* labyrinthine with secret drawers. And old paintings: an Annunciation with Donors, a View of Rome. It was a place to dream myself into existence.

And then there was Katje, sweet, sweet refuge. When I was very small and she didn't yet live with us, I remember her visiting one cold winter night, wrapped in a wool coat with a squirrel-fur collar. I can feel that fur on my face, wet with snow, and Katje's yielding cheek. And then she did come to stay, and so there was always Katje. But, if I am truthful, in my depths the loneliness remained.

I lived in that room as a child, and I live with it now inside me. I have recreated it too in my office, literally and figuratively. And so I have become that room for others – a place of refuge, full of memories and old things. Katje's memories are there, too, mingled with my own. She was born, I think, in about 1816, though her earliest memories were of the twenties. And she herself was full of even older memories – reminiscences of uncles who'd fought at Jena and who remembered learning with horror of the entrapment at Varennes. And then, in her own long lifetime, revolutions, vast, imponderable events. The sea boiled, and in its midst stood Katje – a beacon and a rock. She shines for me still.

Perhaps I never loved anyone but Katje . . . Katje and children. That thought dismays me.

4. I have not written here for two whole weeks. Even now, I have the feeling of facing a blank wall. Not completely blank perhaps. Over there,

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a shred of green brocade, and up, near the second molding, a bit of "Chinese" paper. The princess is in her summer house. Fu dogs and young maidens attend her. She looks at herself in a hand mirror and ornaments her hair. (Why does this image sadden me?) Outside, a lotus pool reflects the sky. Deer browse among the peonies.

Compare this to the gardens of Fragonard: lovers leaping over walls, stealing kisses, walking dappled avenues of limes. In a grove, Venus chastises her little boy; a swarthy gallant fondles a young girl's rosy breast.

The narcissism in that bit of chinoiserie is evident: a lonely self contemplates her specular companion. That's why I feel so sad. I'm not distracted by the conventions of gallant love or by the gilded boiseries. A lover *breaks* into an enclosed garden; the girl, absorbed in reverie, is no longer alone. It's an image of the Annunciation as Clairon might have played it: "La Vierge Surpris par l'Amour." I am the Virgin, of course. But that swain of the Annunciation – who is he?

I'm too old. This garden will be my tomb.

5. I haven't made a mark here since the end of last year, and now it's after Easter. The word "tomb" still rumbles in my mind. Christ's tomb: the stone rolled back,the uncomprehending Marys. These are the days when He walks among us and we don't recognize His face. Piranesi's "Pyramid of Cestius" hangs above my desk – a stone monument sprouting leaves. I imagine myself a Ptolemaic prince inside it. We're at the edge of two worlds here: Greece and Egypt, mystery and reason. The patient stretches out and I squat behind him, the ever-watchful baboon.

These walls will always hold me. My dogs: the white Athenian beauty, the handsome Nubian one. And here's my ship with its great eye. See: The oars really move; the articulated oarsmen really row. In the dawn we sail for Memphis, the "Life of Two Lands."

Psychoanalysis can't be written the way other things can. They're wrong who model their work on the *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, as if Franklin and Buffon were the progenitors of this field. They should look to Scheherazade or Poe: people whose lives depended on telling tales. Tales, not novels. How I detest that pretense to reality! The reverse is true: what seems most lifelike is most artificial, and what seems most fabulous is exactly how things are.

Katje used to read to me from the *Thousand and One Nights* in the measured words of the Abbé Galland. I shall never forget that magic invocation: *Sire, il y avait autrefois un marchand . . .*

In declaiming these words, like the spell of Ali Baba, a door opened

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on a secret room – the same door that in Egyptian tombs permits the soul to come and go. Katje, in this way, was becoming my first analyst as Scheherazade was her king's. In this way, too, Katje became my Scheherazade.

What does it mean to be an analyst along the lines of this formidable odalisque? According to the legend, the king had suffered a terrible blow when his wife betrayed him with the Negro, Masoud. Torn by rage and despair, he would revenge himself on all women – like Jack the Ripper – a Ripper with license. The brave Scheherazade determines to save her sex by means of an ingenious ruse. For this she is well equipped. She has immense erudition, a prodigious memory, a penetrating mind and superb poetic gifts. And to what end does she place these wide accomplishments? To the end of telling tales.

Pascal, too, divined the needs of kings. "Le Roy," he wrote, "est environée de gens qui ne ponce pesent qu'a divirtir le Roy, et l'empescher de penser a luy. Car il est malheureux, tout Roy qu'il est, s'il y pense." That is the essence of Sheherazade's wisdom: to divert her husband endlessly and so keep him from the abyss of thinking on himself.

The free imagination, like the thousand-petaled rose, is unceasingly regenerative. Images metamorphose into one another; stories within stories unfold. Like the King's desire, the flower closes on itself each night and in the morning begets itself anew.

In psychoanalysis, of course, it is the patient who tells the tale, over and over in different ways, incorporating memories, real and imagined, digressing, returning, finding new inflections, connecting disparate threads, weaving a picture of his life that occupies a plane other than the plane of life but no less . . .

It is the analyst's task to listen, and to see that the tale is never done. Like Scheherazade. Like the king.

6. Last night Alice gave an intimate musicale – just a few of us in her small green drawing room. Her stepdaughter Daphne played the cello in the Schubert B-flat Trio. All through the andante, I found myself staring at a bowl of flowers – a small crystal bowl touched here and there with gold. The bouquet was simple: two crimson roses with their leaves, one open, the other partly closed. Then, a single tulip of a more cadmium red, brushed with lines of black. All three were set against a double spray of lilacs, heavy and intensely white. Opposite me sat the old Baroness von R., the flowers glowing against her dress. Somehow their beauty and the music opened an ache in my heart; I could not contain it. Before the scherzo I fled the room. When Alice came to find me later, the tears had come and gone, but the ache, the ache . . .

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Entblüht auf meinem Grabe ein Blume
Die Rose der Asche meines Herzens . . .[*]

When I came back, everyone was drinking champagne and smoking. A bluish haze floated above, and in it, words: altarpiece . . . Paris . . . cinema . . . Jew.

7. When I say the tale is never done, I think I must be wrong. Because the tale ends in the body. (In this, Freud was surely right.)

The problem is, to *be* a body.

When an animal satisfies its hunger or is hurt, that is all. When I suck my lover's cock, I suck (or so they say) my mother's breast. But not only that. I also suck that *Zuckerbaby* Nannerl bought me one day in the Prater. We were walking down the Hauptallée, she and I, and I wanted so to ride the Ferris wheel. But she was too . . . too something. The capacity for metaphor yields poetry, perhaps, but also, a substitute for *mindless* joy.

I want sex to be entirely a matter of lips, tongues, fingertips, streamings. Or, for that matter, of pain. Pain and pleasure, at a certain extreme, are equal. They wipe out thought.

We *are* on the Ferris wheel, Nannerl and I. Slowly it climbs and she grips my hand. We are so high, I can see the cathedral and the palace. The wheel reaches it apex, hesitates, rocks, then descends, gathering speed. Next time it rises faster than before and descends at even greater speed. We're being whirled around now, more and more – the world's colors all ablur. At a distance, I sense Nannerl's terror but I refuse to look at her. I keep looking *outside,* into that glorious kaleidoscope of nothing.

7. Today, H. told me of Freud's death. I don't yet know how I feel. I remember meeting him first in Vienna at N's, but I wasn't drawn to him. He'd looked at me distractedly, and when I tried to talk of N's Manets (she has two of his best flower paintings) he barely responded. He liked only Classical things, less for their beauty, I suspected, than for their associations. For my part, I *refused* to talk about analysis – boring, boring! Finally, we hit on Yvette Guilbert. We both remembered that

[*]I have not been able to trace the source of this fragment, although it may derive from a poem by Heine, imperfectly remembered.

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charming, slightly naughty song she used to sing (or is it "speak"?) before she reformed herself:

Un fiacre allait trottinant,
Cahin, Caha
Hu' dia! Hop lá!
Un fiacre allait trottinant.
Jaune, avec un cocher blanc.

Derriér' les stores baissés
Cahin, caha
Hu' dia! Hop lá!
Derriér' les stores baissés
On entendit des baisers.

Remembering that song had *broken the ice* [in English]. We reminisced about Paris. Those were heady days for him, full of discovery and the first hints of. . . . They were for me, too. I was staying with the Vicomte d'A, Katje's old lover, and went with his daughter to my first masked ball – she (rather scandalously) as the young Byron and I as Juliette Récamier. We got home very late, full of youthful excitement, and stayed up even later, laughing and talking. Suddenly she kissed me. She was still in her Byron costume and strangely handsome. I let her seduce me. Knowing through her own body what felt best, she gave me the very greatest pleasure. And yet . . .

The next day I rang Freud up and asked for an appointment. He was hesitant; his days had become too full, he said, to take on another analysand. But when I assured him I wanted only a single meeting, he was very gracious. He gave me the two hours he usually reserved for his tea and saw me that same day.

In his room, I felt uncannily at home. The objects couldn't have been more different, of course, but the clutter was the same. I was reminded of Zeugmayer's wonderful panoptikon: a round room strewn with sand and on whose walls, subtly painted with fish, the lights played so cleverly one felt at the bottom of the sea. I saw that this room was made to contain him in his reveries, as mine was to contain me.

And so that was what I talked of – my room and all that it meant to me. I sat up at first, but then I asked if I could lie down, although I knew it wasn't customary.

He nodded, so I went on: ". . . an old chromolithograph of the Sacred Heart. I know it's ridiculous, but it moves me. The heart has its reasons. How sad that image is fading from our world. A heart beats for me, not just my own. And yet, my own. I give my heart to you. I give

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it up for you."

"Reason is heartless. In his library, my father had the complete works of Voltaire, bound in green. And also the *Encyclopédie*, for which he must have paid a great deal of money. He had a puerile love of knowledge – like a little boy. Hoarding his facts greedily like the treasures in a small boy's pocket. My room, too, is full of treasures. On the chimney piece are Katje's Meissen magpies, and between them an old clock I salvaged from the house. Chronos, like Atlas, carries an orb encircled by the hours, while above him the Fates spin. The clock is broken, but I see very few patients and have no need to guard my time."

"Above it is a portrait by Wojnakowski in pastels – a pretty young girl with a goldfinch. When I asked Katje who she was, her face grew unusually grave. 'That,' she said, 'is Mademoiselle Sophie. She was perhaps seventeen or eighteen when Bonaparte's armies came through and two officers were billeted in the house. One of them was particularly handsome and filled with the ideals of republicanism. Sophie had just spent her first, disillusioning season at court after a childhood among the Carmelites, and had not yet had time to come to terms with things as they are. She was ripe to have her head turned. When the army moved on to the invasion of Russia, little Sophie followed her officer. As you can see, she was a delicate, carefully tended child, quite unable to look after herself. She had the courage to leave her cage, but none of the resources to survive. She was taken outside Moscow and raped repeatedly, the snow around her body turning pink with her blood. The officer eventually wrote to the family and, to his credit, shot himself in the mouth.' "

"Katje told this as a tragedy, which, of course, it was. And yet . . . she *escaped*, little Sophie; she had her moment of free flight. She loved passionately and was loved. What more does it take to complete a life?"

I grew silent at this point, and Freud did not interrupt. Eventually, I resumed.

"I know you don't care for religion. Nevertheless, I find myself visited by faith – a fact for which I will not apologize and that I cannot explain. Yet, that gift alone makes life good. Whatever can be *willed* or figured out turns out in the end to be trivial. Sometimes, prayer bursts out of me. I call it by that conventional name but, really, it is just an overflowing. Although I cannot ever explicate what I've said, these words seem to be my only true ones: O heart, O pulsing O beating heart, O wounded O weeping heart O heartworld O my heart!"

"Three years ago, I was suffering from severe palpitations. They would last for hours and leave me washed out and terrified. Then, one day, as I was looking at that old picture, these words came out of me.

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Saying them, I "understood" that my heart was the Heart. That it beat for me – that it *beat* me, if you can make sense of that. I mean that I felt myself a pulse driven by the beating of the Heart – included in its love. After that, the arrhythmia vanished and never came back."

"The image of the Sacred Heart is always free. The human heart is hidden, caged within its ribs. The other, even though it weeps its blood, yet it is free."

I grew silent again, and, after a while, Freud spoke.

"If you were to remain my patient, I would not say this to you, but we are a little like two people who meet on a train, *nicht wahr*? In the compartment of a train going, say, from Vienna to Budapest? You have with you some *kippfeln* or a sack of *langues de chattes*. I have perhaps a thermos of coffee and two little Sèvres cups in a leather case. We offer each other what we have and pass the time."

"Look around this room, Madame. All the old gods are here – of Greece and Egypt, of Rome. This is the house of an archaeologist, someone might say, of one who peels back the sediments of time and shows us what lies hidden there: treasures, yes, and also unspeakable things." He paused. "Such a person would be right, of course, but only to a point. Because, this is not just the cell of a scholar but also of a prisoner. Like you, Madame, I have walled myself in with these things and, at the same time, I have drawn comfort from them. They comfort me and they bind me – just like the Lilliputians bound Gullliver with thousands of tiny strings. You see, over there is Horus, and Sekmet with her lion's head. Anubis, Neith, Aphrodite, and Janus. From each of them comes a tiny filament, as strong and invisible as spider's silk. I shall never leave this room alive or, if I should be forced to leave, I doubt I would survive for long."

As he spoke, I remembered the voice of the Pasha from the *Entführung* – a tragic, deeply seductive voice. Among all those charming marionettes *à la Turc*, the Pasha alone seems fully human.

"I am going to say in a few words what should, in fact, take years. These rooms, Madame, are our mothers. We could analyze this, of course . . . we could give many reasons. But the fact remains that we have each created a room that is our mother. We cannot imagine living apart from her. No one would ever guess this of us, we with our profes sions, our families, our lovers. But we return always to the consolation of these rooms. For this reason, we have never truly loved, which is, as they say, to "lose one's heart." Our hearts are still beating in our rooms, hidden away there in the secret drawer of an old chest of your beloved *varagueña*."

"In your extraordinary communion with the Sacred Heart, you have

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been given a great gift - a *Vorspeise* of true freedom. For me, there is no hope. But for you, Madame, there may be. Pray, since you believe in prayer, that you will find the strength to flee that room. Or, that you will be forced to. And when you leave, take nothing – neither Katje's magpies nor little Sophie's picture. Nothing. Go out, naked as you came, into the world."

We were both silent for awhile. Then, in the distance, I heard a tiny bell. Freud stood up and offered his hand to help me rise. We said goodbye.

Nothing, of course, was changed by that interview. I returned to Budapest and took up my life as before. On Thursdays K. and I lunched as usual, at Gundel's in the zoo. Sophie's eternal smile continued to float above the unmoving clock.

I learned later that Freud was forced to leave and, indeed, did not survive it long. From what I hear he tried to recreate in Maresfield Gardens his old rooms in the Berggasse. But they could have been only a stepmother. The true cords that bound and nourished him had been cut. Saying that, I can weep.

9. I'm wrapped warmly in my room, lapped by its surfaces and things, but outside I hear the booming of the guns. Old Steinmetz came today to reupholster the sofa, the Italian one. I chose a pale yellow silk, scattered with rosebuds. He tells me his relations in Poland have all disappeared.

This room is a cocoon. All of Hungary is, sheltering itself against the modern world. Not that modernity is good. Like Goya's *Saturn*, it will end by cannibalizing its children. But before that, what will it do to us?

10. Today I was reading from the *Duino Elegies,* from the one dedicated to Kassner:

> [Tod] sehen wir allein; das freie Tier
> hat seinen Untergang stets hinter sich
> und vor sich gott, und wenn es geht, so gehts
> in Ewigkeit, so wie die Brunnen gehen.

I laid down the book, put on my hat and gloves, and walked straight to my solicitor's, "So wie die Brunnen gehen." In reality, the marriage has been over for years. But somehow that *civilized* thing has ceased to be acceptable. No more.

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11. I am writing on the train, traveling through village after tiny village towards Slovakia. Julia has asked me to look in on her neices at Schintau – to save them, if I can, or at least to see if they're alive. I doubt they are, but I would do anything for her.

When we were little, she was my only playmate. Not often enough; not so often as we would have liked. Yet, I never showed her that room where I hid myself. Not even to Julia. I was such a serious child. But Julia . . . Julia was gay, charming, pretty. I can picture her in a wine velvet frock with a green sash. And a broad-brimmed hat with cherries. She had perfect skin and rosy lips. No wonder Béla found her irresistible.

Oh Julia!

As we passed through the stations, the little beds of red and white begonias spell out the old slogan, "Nem, nem, soha!" [No, no, never!]* And the phrase repeats itself to the rhythm of the wheels until I want to scream. Julia crochets or does her petit point. She knows how to quiet her mind.

Schintau station. The Jews are gone. Through the half-open doors of the little synagogue I can see two peasants playing cards.

Going home again. For the first time in years, I have the sudden impulse to see the house and make a detour. Those glorious rococo gates still stand, even if the gilt is gone and the iron is decaying. The arms are there, too, and that improbable motto: *Vehimur in Altum* – We are borne into the deep. I have never understood it. It is an exceedingly strange house, I realize. The facade is pure Palladian (based on the Mocenigo designs, some pedant told me). But behind its measured stone is a deeply irrational structure, modified many times. The public rooms are all correctly classical: intelligent double cubes and ovals, paneled and pilastered. But beyond them the place is an impenetrable maze: staircases leading nowhere; walled-up doorways; grand Vitruvian entrances tunneling into low medieval vaults. Time turns back on itself, loops and knots itself into unimaginable tangles. Outside, the English park has thrived, but the parterres exist only in outline – like the foundations of an ancient villa unearthed by archaeologists. And the boxwood maze is a field of stumps.

Of course, I found my inevitable way towards that room. There ought to be a rule, as firm as a commandment: "Thou shalt not," etc. Because it had become just a room, a room full of things. Then, suddenly, an image cracked into place. I pushed aside a chest and an old torchiere to reach that place, that loose board in the paneling. The

*The answer to the question, "Can it remain like this?" refers to the immense losses of Hungarian territory following the Treaty of Versallies.

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wood was a bit swollen but it did come out and there, in a shallow niche, lay the old box. When I was perhaps seven or eight, I had written a confession: of my unhappiness? Of . . . I don't know what. I put the paper in that tortoise shell box and shut it away in the wall. There it had lain for over forty years. With what trembling hands I opened it!

Intact! I unfolded the paper, preparing to uncover the truth of my life – its secret essence. Nothing. The damp must have got in over the years and the ink had run. Just a white sheet of paper, faintly stained with blue.

The fog's so thick now I can't see a thing. What lights there are glow like empty halos. I remember a book of hours in the library. The illuminator had painted all the scenes: the Annunciation, the Marriage at Cana, the Crucifixion – all without the figures! Fog makes the world an emptiness waiting to be peopled: with pigeons, larvae, roses, tumors, microbes, sapphires, angels,scorpions, desert saints and harlots, duchesses, and whales. That's with hindsight, of course. First, just a gray expectation. No ability to imagine; nothing to base imagination on. The *nihil* at the bottom of Creation.

12. There has been no time to write, no time to think. When I reached home from Y, the house had been ransacked. Not merely robbed but brutalized, wrecked beyond . . . Swastikas painted everywhere. The very walls axed. Sophie's picture slashed again and again, and the magpies . . . I felt as if I'd been murdered. I wanted to collapse, but something in me stiffened. I pulled myself into the bathroom and lifted up the drain. Safe!

That night I spent with K., the two of us patiently sewing the jewels into the quilting of my coat. Thank God it was winter. In the morning I left. For where? I'd no idea. We traced a vague route on the map, but who knew what the obstacles would be? It didn't matter.

In the event, there were few obstacles. People are still intimidated by titles and a certain. . . . Corruption took care of the rest.

So, tomorrow I sail from Lisbon for the New World. They say Marie Antoinette had the possibility of escaping there; she preferred the guillotine. I wonder how someone with such perfect taste could possibly have been wrong? To "start over again" is impossible. Whatever happens, it must be *unimaginably* different. That thought comforts me. Katje had a friend, the Princess Tatischev, who moved into a sort of Trianon in the park. She had fled from the Bolsheviks with boxes of mementos: photos of the Czar framed in pink diamonds, enameled spoons, gold-encrusted icons of dubious quality. Katje spoke to her in French and allowed her to pretend they were taking tea at Tsarskoye Seloe. *I shall speak only English!* I shall idealize neither the past nor the present. The real – only

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the real shall be my refuge.

Postscript

Dearest Julia:

If I had needed consolation, your letter surely would have given it. Does it surprise you I'm not grieving? Your heart is like an old rose, a full Bourbon rose with little babies peeping out from under every petal. Do you remember that song Z composed (it was with you in mind) . . . "tous les enfants de la terre, de la mer et du ciel sont a elle?" Not me. I am an animal mother. When my children were small, I loved them passionately. But when they grew up, I . . . forgot them. Thirty years ago R's death would have undone me. Not today.

I am sending you my journals; perhaps the reasons for all this are contained in them. But only one reason matters now.

After a lifetime of living in the past, I am finally and fully in the present. I cannot tell you what it's like! For years this journal has been my chief companion. Now that endless self-communion weighs me down. Language itself feels leaden. If anyone should think to publish them I wouldn't mind, provided the names could be disguised. But now, if I am to be free, I must put these things away.

All along I've been telling you about the ranch, about my love of it. But there are things I have not said. For years the place has been mismanaged, and putting things right took time and an enormous effort. But all that was good. Through my work I took possession of the land; I took all those acres truly into my care. The local shepherds were shiftless. Despite their tenure, I had to get rid of them. I imported three Basques with their dogs, and they have been magnificent. Then, in the north, a group of Indians were squatting. They declared themselves to be descendants of the original inhabitants and would not budge. I knew their claim to be false and had almost determined to evict them. Then I thought, "This earth is God's," and I deeded them their hill. We are friends.

The labor of a ranch is unending, but there came a time when I looked around and saw that it was good. Then I looked at myself. Julia, I did not recognize me. My face had grown leathery and full of wrinkles. Yet not old. Riding every day had made me strong. It was a handsome face that looked back at me from the glass; "I am like a man," I thought. With that, desire leapt in me. That night I had a dream. I saw myself carrying a huge phallus – a phallus I myself had made. On my face, I wore a sly smile. Yvette Gilbert's smile was like that. "Derrière les stores baissés, on entendit des baisers."

That is all. Except that the image appeared to me not as in life, but

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as in an old photograph – a sepia photograph in a heart-shaped frame. And below it, on one of those stylized ribbons, "Vehimur in altum" – We are borne into the deep.

I do not interpret dreams. Their "language," it seems to me, belongs to a different realm. So, I went on with my life, but with a different sense to it – a sense of expectation. But of what?

Now, in retrospect, I can say of what. It was an expectation of love. That dream was an Annunciation: a ribbon emerges from the angel's mouth, "Hail, thou that art highly favored." The fulfillment, as with Mary, would take months.

His name is Gar. He is a rancher, like me, and a neighbor, although the distances here are so vast it was a long while before we met. It was our veterinarian who introduced us. My flocks are largely Hampshires, bred equally for wool or meat. Gar has been interbreeding them with Rambouillets to produce better yields of both. He was very generous. He lent me his purebred ram and, more than that, offered me advice of great value. He is a lean, sober man. I would never have guessed he might be courting me. One June day I came by to consult him and surprised him (he had not seen me) declaiming aloud from the *Georgics:* " . . . when summer at the Zephyrs' call sends sheep and goats alike to glades and meadows, let us hasten, as the morning star appears, to the cool pastures."

"While the day is young," I answered, "The grass is gleaming, and on the tender blades there still is dew delightful to the herd."

That, of course, was the beginning. The moment I saw the poetry in this pragmatic man, I loved him. Julia, he is a wonderful lover – not subtle, not concerned to please. He hurts me. I always resist him, knowing I will yield, but not without a fight. He is never put off by my resistance; he pursues me with a steady necessity. He does not think.

And now, I do not think either. "She has lost her head," you'll say. My head, my heart, my cunt . . . everything but my self. I live in the ecstasy of the *Riesenrad*, but it is inseparable from the sheep, the landscape, the horses and dogs, the Indians, from Gar's body, from my own. The wheel spins, Julia, and every inessential thing flies off: Katja's memories, Nannerl's terror, parents, sons. Even you, Julia, whom I love, fly off into a vast field of stars. The night skies here are immensely black, but they do not dwarf me. Sometimes, when I ride alone at night, I spur my horse to gallop. Then, I feel I am charging straight at Heaven, as if I myself were becoming a comet or a constellation. I live in the depths of the galaxies, Julia, and I am not lost.

Selected and translated from the Hungarian by Stephen Kurtz

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POEMS

EUGENIO MONTALE

The Dead

The sea crashing against the opposing
shore lifts a cloud that spumes
till reabsorbed by the shoals. Here one day,
against this iron coast, we hurled our hope
higher than the heaving sea,
and the barren abyss turns green again
as once in days that saw us
still here among the living.

Now that the north wind smooths the raging knot
of brackish currents, driving them back
where they began, someone has hung his nets
on the slashed boughs, draping
the path that sinks down
out of sight –
bleached nets drying in the late cold
touch of the light, while overhead
the blue crystal of the sky blinks
and plunges to an arc of storm-lashed
horizon.

More than seaweed dragged
by the boiling now revealed, our life stirs
against such torpor: whatever in us
was resigned to limit, by one day stilled,
now seethes; between the strands weaving
branch to branch, the heart thrashes
like the gallinule
trapped in the meshes
where an icy stasis holds us fast,
motionless, migratory.

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So too perhaps
even the dead in the ground may be denied
all repose: a force more pitiless
than life pulls them thence, from all around
driving them toward this coast – ghosts
tortured by human memories, breaths
without voice or substance, betrayed
by darkness; and even now their thwarted flights,
so close to us still, brush by,
then drift down in the sea
that sifts them.. . . .

Translated from the Italian by William Arrowsmith

Ishtar and Gilgamesh
(from Tablet VI of *The Gilgamesh Epic*)*

When Gilgamesh the king came back to the city
after the victory over the demon Huwawa,

he washed the filth of battle from his hair
and washed the filth of battle from his body,

put on new clothes, a clean robe and a cloak
tied with a sash, and cleaned and polished the weapons

that had been bloody with the hateful blood
of the demon Huwawa, guardian of the forest,

and put a tiara on his shining hair,
so that he looked as beautiful as a bridegroom.

---

*Translator's Note: This metrical version of *The Gilgamesh Epic* will be published this May by Farrar, Straus & Giroux. It is based on the literal translation by E. A. Speiser in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Also consulted were *Gilgamesh* by John Gardner and John Maier, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* by Maureen Kovacs, and the free prose version by N. K. Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

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The goddess Ishtar saw him and fell in love
with the beauty of Gilgamesh and longed for his body.

"Be my lover, be my husband," she spoke and said.
"Give me the seed of your body, give me your semen;

plant your seed in the body of Ishtar.
Abundance will follow, riches beyond the telling:

a chariot of lapis lazuli
and brass and ivory, with golden wheels,

and pulled instead of mules by storm-beasts harnessed.
Enter our house: from floor and doorpost breathes

the odor of cedar; the floor kisses your feet.
Princes and kings bow down to offer their wealth,

the best of the yield of orchard, garden and field.
Your doe-goats give you triplets, your ewes also;

your chariot-steeds and oxen beyond compare."
Gilgamesh answered and said: "What could I offer

the queen of love in return, who lacks nothing at all?
Balm for the body? The food and drink of the gods?

I have nothing to give to her who lacks nothing at all.
You are the door through which the cold gets in.

You are the fire that goes out. You are the pitch
that sticks to the hands of the one who carries the bucket.

You are the house that falls down. You are the shoe
that pinches the foot of the wearer. The ill-made wall

that buckles when time has gone by. The leaky
waterskin soaking the waterskin carrier.

Who were your lovers and bridegrooms? Tammuz the slain,
whose festival-wailing is heard, year after year,

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under your sign. He was the first who suffered.
The lovely shepherd-bird whom Ishtar loved,

whose wing you broke and now wing-broken cries,
lost in the darkness of the forest floor:

"My wing is broken, broken is my wing,"
The lion whom you loved, strongest of beasts,

the mightiest of the forest, who fell into
the calamity of the pits, the bewildering

contrivances of the goddess, seven times seven.
You broke the great wild horse and snaffled him:

he drinks the water his hobbled hooves have muddied.
The goatherd who brought you cakes and daily for you

slaughtered a kid, you turned into a wolf
chased away by the herdsmen, whose hairy flanks,

smelly and mangy, the guardian dogs snap at.
You loved Ishullanu, your father's gardener,

who brought you figs and dates to adorn your table.
You looked at him and showed yourself to him

and said: 'Now, touch me where you dare not, touch me
here, touch me where you want to, touch me here.'

He said: 'Why should I eat the rotten food,
having been taught to eat the wholesome food?

Why should I sin and be cursed and why should I live
where the cold wind blows through the reeds upon the outcast?'

Some say the goddess turned him into a frog
among the reeds, with haunted frog voice chanting,

beseeching what he no longer knows he longs for;
some say into a mole whose blind foot pushes

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over and over again against the loam
in the dark of the tunnel, baffled and silent, forever.

And you would do with me as you did with them."

Version by David Ferry

PAUL CELAN

Flower*

The stone.
The stone in the air which I followed.
Your eyes as blind as the stone.

We were
hands.
We scooped the darkness empty, we found the
word coming up the summer:
flower.

Flower – a word of the blind:
your eye and my eye
take care of
the watering.

Growth,
with its heartwalls are leafing
too.

One more word like this, and the hammers
swing free.

---

*Translator's Note: These poems were originally published in the volume *Atemwende*, with the exception of "Flower," which originally appeared in *Sprachgitter. Speech-grille.*

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•

Corroded by the undreamed
covered with footprints of sleepless wandering,
the breadland throws open the mountain of life.

From its crumbs
you knead anew our names –
with an eye
equal to yours
on each finger,
I feel them for
a place through which
to keep vigil for you,
the brilliant
hunger candle between my lips.

•

With their masts singing earthwards,
the wracks of heaven are sailing.

You sink your teeth
into their wooden hymns.

You are the pennant
resisting song

•

Pale filament of suns
over the gray-black wasteland.
A thought tree-high
is stretching to grasp the tone of their light: there are
songs yet to be sung beyond
man.

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•

At the white phylacteries – the
Lord of this hour
was
a creature of winter, whatever
happened, it happened
for his sake –
my climbing mouth bit fast, once more,
when searching for you, you trace of smoke,
high above,
in the shape of a woman
on your way to my
fiery thoughts
in the black gravel
beyond the words of the chasm, through
which I saw you walk on high
legs with
your severe head
with its heavy lips
on that body made alive
by my deadly accurate
hands.

Tell your fingers
which accompany you
down into the crevices
how I knew you, how far
I pushed you into the depths where
my bitterest dream
slept with you, searching for your heart,
in the bed
of my irredeemable name.

Translated from the German by Luitgard N. Wundheiler

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IMRÉ ORAVECZ

Water

The brook originated in the Dolina
and flowed through the village,

it cut past the end of the courtyards
and ran just below the gardens,
haystacks, pigsties, plum trees, and elder bushes stood on its banks,

it didn't meander,
but it wasn't straight either,
it turned right and left,
diligently avoided the choked-up deposits
around rusty pots and dead cats,

otherwise it wasn't choosy,
it admitted and digested everything,
bathtub water as well as dung water or mash,
bedded down with everything
in a liquid state,
threw itself eagerly into every chemical process,

its water was usually shallow,
sometimes clear,
sometimes black,

in the coves,
where the current was weak,
it seemed stationary,
a thin, gray film formed on it,
it was like a cataract on the eye,
only creased,

sometimes, in summer, it all but dried up,
but during a snowmelt or heavy rainfall it suddenly flooded
and surged angrily toward its nearby destination,
the Tarna,

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those were the moments of purification,
when it rebelled,
became conscious of its dignity,
and started a new life,

then everything reverted to normal,
it took up
where it had left off,

again gulped down all insults and indignities,
here picked up sludge,
there put it down,
that fine substance of complicated composition,
and allowed
butterflies and bees to alight on it and drink,

when ducks or geese caught sight of it,
they always got excited
and ran toward it with a great clatter,

miraculously their feet were never cut by glass,

the brook served the village well,
it gathered, processed, purified, and passed on
the filth made by man,
but the best part about it
was that one could wade into it barefoot,
build little dams,
skim paper boats,
walk in it the length of the whole village,
investigate the secrets of strange houses,
spy on girls,
pee in it,
and when nobody was looking
take a dip in it.

Translated from the Hungarian by Bruce Berlind with Mária Kóröosy

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JÁNOS PILINSZKY

Holy Thief

for Mari Töröcsik

By then the flies had covered him

beyond agony,
beyond tetanus,
and far beyond nails, wounds,
neither object nor body,
in public
in between
neither loitering
(dented monstrance)
nor flight

friend,
friendship forever.

Experience

Experience, like Kronos,
eats his sons.
Genuine knowledge
is inexperienced, knows nothing,
is acquainted, can be acquainted with nothing.

So he feels, so only can he feel
eternal peace, calm, when
the henchman snacks on bacon, and he himself
unsuspectingly arrives, steps in,
then stiffens, lies supine
and starts bleeding in a nonexistent space
that only heaven resembles.

Translated from the Hungarian by Emery George

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TOMAZ SALAMUN

Things
VII.

I shall draw a cross
†
s-bends on my rocking chair
how sadly hangs a shirt
after a body has left it
but it is still a shirt
and that's where the key point of our defeat lies
and a suitcase and a ruler
have you ever seen a chair
running from a bathroom to a kitchen
or the opposite direction it's all the same
asking hysterically
what will happen to my after-death life
have you ever seen a balcony rail
saying I've had it
I've had it
I've had it
I too love my small life
I too have to get something out of it
and if you ever walked on glagoljashka street
and saw between the house number 4
and a fountain an old boot lying
there since the year
when the last night regattas were held and Mario won
did the boot ask you
good day and pardon me
for bothering you here on the street
but don't you think
but don't you think
but don't you think
Incomprehensible are things in their cunning
inaccessible to the fury of the living
invulnerable in their incessant flow
you never catch up with them
you never seize them
motionless in their gazing

Translated from the Slovene by Sonja Kravanja

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GEORGI BELEV

Sealed Garden

Garden –
uncaressed
smothered flame
detongued bell
pockmarked cheek
untethered bushes
moldering weed-mats
stone upon stone
laid and hatched
by the emptiness

Garden –
unnursed breast
worm-furrowed nipples
unharvested pain
weighs heavy
you've endured
now you lay moss
for prowling paws
and proudly with each crunch
of bone grow wilder wishing
to remember nothing
of before

Spaces

I've recognized this day
from the beginning.
The cloud is the same
and all the words.

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An invisible hand
scatters birds,
handful after handful.
It will rain this afternoon.
The grass has shrunk.

It's as if
the blades have shot
downward,
now greening
another space

and among them
wanders my look
from someone else's eye, startled
to remember anything at all.

Translated from the Bulgarian by Lisa Sapinkopf

BOHDAN BOYCHUK

Your Plenitude

You scatter the dark
across the earth
and establish the night.

Animals shove aside
thickets
and wade through the darkness.

You lift your face over
the horizon
and establish the day.

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Mountains drink from
your palms
and raise (lift) themselves toward the blue.

Trees wrap themselves
in green wind
and breathe You in.

Birds nest in the armpits
of oaks
and listen to the rustle of planets.

Planets suck the nipples
of earth
and reek with the groans/moans/ of fruits.

And so from age to age
pours a symphony of life
and departure into the life in You.

God is With Us

Becoming man
You made us partly gods,
tucking inside the soul
sky's blue, and punishing
us with a hope and yearning
for divinity.

Becoming man,
You made us the children
of your mercy,
lost in the ephemera of earth
helpless in the other worlds
outside time.

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Open My Lips

Open my lips
so that the words
come out
full and clear
as tears
circled by
Your breath.

So that in the field
of your breathing
they echo violetly.

And enter the souls
of the beaten
like a hope
in You.

The Grapes of Generation

Break
the first grapes
in your mouth
so that your glands
sting from their juice.

Soak your pupils
in a solution
of vine
till the sky's blue
seeps into your eyes.

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Then dress yourself
in the latest songs –
this is the celebration
of your coming through.

Translated from the Ukrainian by Askold Melnyczuk

William Arrowsmith

1925-1992

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GEORGE STADE

Trilling and *Ulysses*

Thirty years ago, shortly after I began teaching at Columbia, Lionel Trilling, with his exacting sense of the obligations that rode on his fame, walked into the office in Hamilton Hall that I shared with three other instructors, introduced himself, and sat down, thus throwing me into that condition of frozen panic with which the wildebeest faces a lion, for that's what we juniors called Lionel Trilling, "the lion." And where my office-mates were, now that I needed them to absorb some of Trilling's armor-piercing, blue-eyed gaze I can't remember. In a fruitless attempt to put me at my ease, Trilling offered me a cigarette, for in those days even smart people smoked, and asked me how I like teaching Humanities A.

We agreed that Thucydides was a very smart man; and then, desperately rummaging around in my forebrain for something, anything, worth saying, I added that the course ought properly to conclude with James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a book that both disestablished and salvaged everything that went before. I gather that you think *Ulysses* is a good novel, said Trilling. His tone was dry. The best ever written, I said, although I had by no means read them all. What's good about it? asked Trilling. Now that was a stumper, for like Joyce, and maybe Trilling, I believed two things about value judgments: that you couldn't help making them, and that you couldn't in the end support them, for value judgments, to quote Joyce, were irremovably "founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void." So I opened my word-hoard to some commonplaces about the novel's stylistic innovations. Maybe, said Trilling, getting up, grinding out his cigarette. You'll remember, he said, moving toward the door, that at the end of his day, Leopold Bloom removes his shoe, sees his big toe poking through a hole in his sock, breaks off a piece of the nail, brings it to his nose, and smells it – "with satisfaction." That's what's really new – and good – about *Ulysses*, said Trilling, and he walked out the door.

Squelched as I was, I could still see that Trilling, like Leopold Bloom, had put his finger on something. For starters, he was right at least in the trivial sense that Bloom was the first character in fiction to sniff his toe-jam. I say this with confidence, although I still have not read all the novels. It is true, of course, that many of the body's waste and by-products had appeared in earlier literature, usually in sermons and satires, usually for the purpose of shaming us out of our congenital narcissism

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and self-regard. But the remarkable, and original, quality of the passage in *Ulysses* is its lack of emphasis, the absence of either sermonizing heat or satirical exaggeration, of either shame or shamelessness. There's a smile, but it is tolerant. Bloom does what he does because had he lived in the world rather than in Joyce's words that is what he would have done, because although no one had done it before in fiction, many of us have done something like it in life.

And Bloom does it as he does other things, as he loves his daughter, sorrows over his dead son, performs acts of charity, writes doggerel, ponders the structure of the cosmos. He does it, that is to say, naturally, because it is in his nature, because it is as natural for humans to produce toe-jam and smell it as it is to produce children and love them, produce poems and admire them, produce cosmologies and crouch under them. And Joyce has Bloom do it because to deny toe-jam is to move toward a denial of the source of love, poetry, and grand ideas – the human body. That denial would make love, poetry, and thought unnatural or supernatural, which amounts to the same thing, would make them the products of extraordinary efforts of the spirit, rather than of ordinary flesh. The censored body, in sum, is as alienated from its products as in the Marxist scheme a worker is alienated from the products of his labor.

Such, I take it, was part of Trilling's meaning, for any concrete instance has more potential meaning in it than is actual in the commentaries that bury it. Trilling, let's say, cited Bloom's toe-jam as a kind of synedoche, a part for the whole. As there, so elsewhere in the novel, so in all those passages in which characters pick their noses, probe their navels, pass menstrual blood, vomit, urinate, defecate, expectorate, eructate, ejaculate, and flatulate. Take, for example, the first of them, the episode in which Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's portrait of himself as a young man, walks along Sandymount Strand.

After trying to fix the watery flux of experience in words, Stephen watches a dog lift his leg. "The simple pleasures of the poor," he thinks. And then, out of his old obsessions and immediate sensations, a poem comes to him, a vampirish love poem. "Here. Put a pin in the chap, will you?" he thinks, and he leans out over a table of rock to write it down. But soon the "greengoldenly" flow of the seawater moves his "poor dogsbody," as Buck Mulligan calls it, to the simple pleasures of the poor. In the following passage from Stephen's stream of consciousness, sea water, water of another kidney, and watery words flow together:

> Better get this job over quick. Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseiss oos. . . . In cups of rock it slops: flop, clap, slop; bounded in barrels. And, spent, its speech ceases. It flows purling,

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widely flowing, floating foampool, flower unfurling.

But Stephen's fit of creativity has not yet run its course. He searches in his pockets for a handkerchief as a minute before he had searched them for paper on which to write his poem – only to remember that earlier in that day, Buck Mulligan had taken it to wipe his razor. "The bard's noserag!" Mulligan had said: "A new colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen." And turning to Dublin Bay, he describes the sea as "a great sweet mother" "the snotgreen, the scrotumtightening sea," his improvement on Homer's epithet, "the winedark sea." So now, Stephen Dedalus, Irish poet, all at sea, produces Irish art: "He laid the dry snot picked from his nostril on a ledge of rock, carefully," Joyce writes, and we can hope that the ledge is the same on on which Stephen wrote his poem, another bodily product, and like the urine, another emission of his substance.

The effect of such passages, as they accumulate, is multiple. On the one hand, Irish culture is naturalized: it's the color of the sea and Stephen's snot. On the other hand, the sea is acculturated: it's the color of Irish art, and it stands to Ireland as the Mediterranean stood to ancient Greece. Likewise, Stephen's snot is at once acculturated and naturalized: it's the color of Irish art and the sea. But for Joyce, the body comes first: art, words, culture, and our conception of the sea come out of the body. In this respect, Joyce is unlike our hegemonic Foucaultistical, Lacanite, and Derridadist culture critics, for whom the body is constructed by culture and its discourses. When Frank Budgeon protested against Joyce's corporeal emphasis - "But the minds, the thoughts of the characters," he said – Joyce replied "if they had no body they would have no mind." To uncensor the body, therefore, is to demystify culture, a job that more than ever needs doing.

The equation between words and Irish culture, on the one hand, and the body's by-products, on the other, is developed throughout the novel – in the next episode, for example, the first given over to Leopold Bloom. As Bloom sits at stool, he reads a story entitled "Matcham's Masterstroke," the "prize tidbit" of this issue of *Tidbits* magazine. Finishing both with satisfaction, Bloom wipes himself with "Matcham's Masterstroke." And later in the day, Bloom walks out of the Ormond Bar, inside which Dublin layabouts are singing lugubriously, and feels gas burbling inside him, generated, he supposes, from a glass of burgundy he had drunk. He passes a shop window on display in which is a portrait of the Irish hero Robert Emmet and his famous last words: "When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth then and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done." As Bloom reads the words, he makes some music of his own:

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> *When my country takes her place among.*/Prrprr./Must be the bur./Eff! Oo. Rrpr./*Nations of the earth.* No-one behind . . . *Then and/not till then.* Tram kran kran kran. Good oppor./Coming. Krandlkrankran. I'm sure its the burgund./Yes. One, two. *Let my epitaph be.* Kraaaaaa./ *Written. I have.*/Pprrpffrrppff./*Done.*

And the chapter ends.

Leopold Bloom, we might say, belongs to the logo-cloacal school of literary criticism, of which Stephen Dedalus is the most subtle theorist. In the library scene, you will remember, Stephen argues that Shakespeare's plays flow from and refer back to his bodily experience. "As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, Stephen said, from day to day, their molecules shuttle to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image". His listeners are unsympathetic. They want to believe that the great poets, in the words of A. E. , "Bring our minds into contact with the eternal wisdom, Plato's world of ideas." But Stephen holds to the here and now, and in the process is forced to recognize another equivalence: as Shakespeare's plays are to Shakespeare, so Stephen's theories are to Stephen. At one point Stephen says to himself "I think you're getting on very nicely. Just mix up a mixture of theolological-philolological. *Mingo, minxi, mictum, mingere,*" thus conjugating the Latin verb for "to urinate," thus conjoining the processes by which we make water, plays, philology, theology, and novels like *Ulysses.*

At first glance, such passages, and there are many of them, devalue art: it's just another secretion. At second glance, such passages revalue excretions: they are equated with art. But in a third glance, such passages normalize or naturalize both, for to Joyce the natural was the norm. Above all, such passages restore, or even resurrect, the body to consciousness. When Stephen Dedalus, at the end of *Portrait*, announced that he was setting out to forge the uncreated conscience of his race, he spoke for Joyce; and that conscience, as created in Ulysses included the uncensored body.

Even aside from the official censors, not everyone was grateful to Joyce for bringing snot, naval fluff, toe-jam, and the like to consciousness. The reaction to *Ulysses* of Francis Talbot, S. J. was typical of many:

> Many of the words were scummy, scrofulous, putrid, like excrement of the mind. The words are listed in the dictionary, but never in the writings or on the tongue of anyone except the insane, or the lowest human dregs. The critics said how brave. The sexual neurotics said how lovely. The normal person said I'm sick.

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Virginia Woolf, reading *Ulysses* while she was writing *Mrs. Dalloway*, which borrows liberally from *Ulysses*, noted in her Diary that Joyce's novel was "brackish," that she was as "disillusioned by it as by a queasy undergraduate scratching his pimples." "An illiterate, underbred book it seems to me [she wrote]: the book of a self-taught working man, and we all know how distressing they are, how egotistical, insistent, raw, striking, and ultimately nauseating." And Virginia Woolf's pal, E. M. Forster, described *Ulysses* as a "dogged attempt to cover the universe with mud," "an epic of grubbiness and disillusion," its aim "to degrade all things and more particularly civilization and art."

But an attempt to cover art with mud is precisely what *Ulysses* is not. It is an achievement, rather – and here I quote Stephen Dedalus – "of an artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being". We note that Stephen thinks of a work of art as "being," or as he says elsewhere, "a radiant body of everliving life." And we get a hint of what Stephen meant by "forging" from something that occurs just before Bloom's momentous sniff of toe-jam. The "Ithaca" episode, you will remember, is written in the form of questions and answers. As Bloom looks in the mirror, the questioner asks "what composite asymmetrical image in the mirror then attracted his attention?" The answer is "the image of a solitary (ipsorelative) mutable (aliorelative) man."

"Aliorelative" means "externally referential," and Bloom is aliorelative to the extent that he reflects and comments on a reality external to the novel, to the extent that he is realistic, mimetic, or better, naturalistic. The same goes for the novel as a whole. "Ipsorelative" means "a reflexive, self-contained organization of cross-references," and *Ulysses* is ipsorelative so far as it is an organization of actions, motifs, and episodes that reflect and comment on each other. And it is precisely such forged and reflexive relations between part and part and between part and whole that distinguished a work of art, as Joyce saw it, from other things. It is the forged relations among snot, navel fluff, toe-jam and the other parts of the novel that transmute them into the "radiant body," "the impalpable, imperishable being," that is *Ulysses*.

Think back to the beginning of the novel, for example, to Buck Mulligan's snotgreen sea, our great sweet mother. Stephen moodily turns from Mulligan and his bowl of shaving lather to Dublin Bay, which he sees as a "dull green mass of liquid" held as in a bowl by a bayshore and skyline. Then, through a tangle of associations, and in the very next sentence, he thinks of his dead mother, how "a bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had

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torn from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting." Stephen thereby sets in motion a sequence of associations that exfoliates throughout the novel. Snot, urine, vomit; nature, art, the human body; the Irish sea and the Mediterranean; Ireland and Ancient Greece; England and Ancient Rome; Bloom and Odysseus; Bloom's navel fluff and the *omphalos*; Stephen's mother, other ghosts, his vocation, his need to cut the apron-strings; a thousand particulars, all become part of the reflexive, self-contained organization of cross-references that in *Ulysses* transmute the detritus of experience and the human body into art.

These cross-references, episode by episode, finally constitute the whole uncensored human body that the novel, in effect, becomes. Each episode, after the first three, is associated with a different part of the body, the Calypso episode with the kidney, the Lestrygonian with the esophagus, the Eumaeus with the nerves, and so on. "Among other things," Joyce told Frank Budgeon, "my book is an epic of the human body." And to Carlo Linati Joyce wrote that his intention was "to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even create its own technique." Those stylistic innovations, then, through a recital of which I had tried to impress Lionel Trilling, those too were conditioned, or even created, by the human body.

By the last episode, which Joyce called the *clou* of the novel, Molly Bloom's notorious soliloquy, the somatic scheme has been fleshed out entirely. "Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me perfectly sane," Joyce wrote to Frank Budgeon; "Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht," I am the flesh that always affirms. The phrase in German is Joyce's revision of Mephistopheles' self-defining announcement in *Faust*: "I am the spirit that denies." Joyce, characteristically, aligns himself with the flesh, which affirms, rather than the spirit, which denies. No reader of *Ulysses* will forget the fleshly rhythms and panting yeses of Molly's last words: "I put my arms around him yes and could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will yes." To his French translator James Joyce wrote "the book must end with the word yes. It must end with the most positive word in the human language." In another letter Joyce explicitly associated Molly's yeses with that part of the female body out of which all human bodies come.

Molly's "yes" is the novel's last word, but Molly's climax is not the novel's. The novel's climax, I believe, occurs earlier, not long after Bloom communes with his toe-jam, and Joyce had a tough time writing it. He could not at first figure out an appropriate parallel to the fero-

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cious climax of the *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus and his mates kill over one hundred suitors and a dozen or so servants. Joyce disliked violence as he disliked other megalomaniacal displays of militant heroism. His solution was to have Bloom run his mind over Molly's suitors and then to accept them, and her adultery, with "equanimity," that shining word. "Equanimity?" asks the questioner. And the answer comes:

> As natural as any and every natural act of a nature expressed or understood executed in natured natures by natural creatures in accordance with his, her and their natured natures, of dissimilar similarity.

In that acceptance, in that equanimity, Joyce tells us, Bloom was "a conscious reactor against the void of incertitude."

The human body, that is, like everything else, is founded on the void. To endorse it as a standard of value is to make an ultimately absurd leap into faith. But at least that standard provides you with a philosophic equanimity, an acceptance of life, the ability to enjoy it. It provides you with a ground, a shaky ground, but a ground, from which to judge the denials of spirit, the oppressions of an alienating culture, the insane distortions of disembodied intellect, all of which are mercilessly explodes in *Ulysses*. And that is why I honor James Joyce and Lionel Trilling: they make the absurd leap into a faith that value, sanity, a sense of proportion, renewal in literature and life, emerge from and return to the uncensored human body, including its snot, navel fluff, and toe-jam.

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PEARL K. BELL

Fiction Chronicle

THE GOLD-BUG VARIATIONS. By Richard Powers. William Morrow and Company. $25.00.
THE TAX INSPECTOR. By Peter Carey. Alfred A. Knopf. $21.00.
TIME'S ARROW. By Martin Amis. Harmony. $18.00.
TALKING IT OVER. By Julian Barnes. Alfred A. Knopf. $21.00.
HIGH COTTON. By Darryl Pinckney. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $21.00.
MATING. By Norman Rush. Alfred A. Knopf. $23.00.
OUTERBRIDGE REACH. By Robert Stone. Ticknor & Fields. $21.95.

One of the tiresome clichés about the state of contemporary fiction claims that publishers fill their lists either with blockbuster trash or with politically correct novels about race, gender, homosexuality, and so on, and that any work of genuine literary merit must necessarily fall through the cracks. Yet even a casual browse through recently published fiction refutes this sweeping indictment. As in any season, the novels that have recently appeared range from the sublime to the pedestrian, and worse, with an astonishing variety of imaginative work in between. And if this column may seem to be making a statement because it deals only with the work of Live Male Writers, the choice has to do with the particular interest aroused by seven very different novels. It has nothing to do with ideology.

One can't help wondering what readers – other than editors and reviewers lashed to the mast of duty – Richard Powers had in mind when he embarked on his inordinately complicated and exhausting third novel, *The Gold Bug Variations*. Surely not "the common reader," if such a creature still exists. Powers is a very clever fellow, highly acclaimed these days, a thirty-four-year-old polymath, the winner of a MacArthur "genius" fellowship, who was trained as a physicist but gave up science for literature. On closer examination he hasn't given up science at all, just put it to a different use. Very long, densely packed stretches of the novel are devoted to the intricacies of genetic research, complete with charts and tables and diagrams and codes and equations that only a scientist in the field might even begin to comprehend. In addition, Powers is intent on instructing us at closely detailed length about computer programming, the subtle connections between music and molecular biology (drawn from Glenn Gould's original recording of the

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Goldberg Variations, hence the insufferably cute title), human heredity, minor Flemish landscape painters, and – oh, yes, lest we forget – two love stories intertwined in a double helix of erudition and desire. Some of this is undeniably dazzling, most of it much more than even an uncommon reader can want to absorb.

Since this is a review of fiction, perhaps it's best to concentrate on the stories and let the encyclopedic clouds of specialized information drift where they may. The two love stories are separated by thirty years. In one, Stuart Ressler, a brilliant young microbiologist at a Midwestern university, sets out in 1957 to break the genetic code and is smitten by a married colleague. They have a passionate affair, but when she refuses to leave her husband, Ressler abandons his scientific research and spends the rest of his life in obscurity as a computer technician. Thirty years later a reference librarian in Brooklyn becomes intrigued with Dr. Ressler, who works nearby, and she enlists the help of his handsome assistant, a failed graduate student in art history, in ferreting out the truth about Dr. Ressler's life, especially the reason why he threw over his Nobel-promising career as a scientist "when he was at the forefront of great discovery." Moving back and forth in time, the two stories unfold in a dizzying multi-layered profusion of puns and allusions and facts, facts, facts – about poetry and art, science and music, pop culture, and much more. Because Jan, the librarian, spends her working hours answering random questions about everything under the sun, we are bombarded by a relentless flow of miscellaneous information, along with moments of surprising banality, such as "Science is not about control. It is about cultivating a perpetual condition of wonder. . . . It is about reverence, not mastery."

The novel is full of prodigies, bloated with facts and theories and aperçus, yet in the end the characters are little more than abstract ciphers, enormous heads on recalcitrant bodies. (Ressler's desire for his beloved, we are told, "awakes the possibilities buried in his cytoplasm.") There is something hermetic and airless about this monstrously cerebral tome. Despite the novel's erudite abundance, Powers conveys no sense of a world beyond the catacomb he has so artfully constructed out of science, computers and music. Though we are given many dates, the book lacks any sense of history, of the time in which all this is going on. Nor do we ever get a clear resolution of the mystery in Ressler's life. This writer's brilliance, in the end, serves little purpose beyond his irrepressible exhibitionism.

Moving from the coruscating heights of Richard Powers's sophisticated imagination to Peter Carey's Australian suburb in *The Tax Inspector* involves a dizzying fall: from very high culture to a grungy low. The Catchprice family, driving its moribund car dealership outside Sydney

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into the ground, is mad, bad, and dangerous to know. Grandma is a gaga octogenarian, who hoards explosives in her purse and knows how to use them. All she ever wanted was a flower farm, "but what she got instead was the smell of rubber radiator hoses, fan belts, oil, grease, petrol vapour . . . overdrafts and customers whose bills ran 90, 120 days past due." Her middle-aged daughter Cathy, who worships Elvis Presley, longs to escape from the car business and become a famous country-and-western singer despite her dismal lack of talent. Grandma's son Mort is a pervert who sexually abused his son Benny when the boy was only three, and Benny has grown into a repulsive sixteen-year-old creep who "had been in trouble with almost everything, lying, cheating, truancy, shoplifting, selling bottled petrol for inhalation. . . . " His favorite pastime is thinking up grisly forms of torture, when he isn't listening to his "self-actualization" cassettes. And his brother Johnny, who has joined the Hare Krishnas, is recurrently lured back to the foul bosom of his family by Grandma's pleas for help. Only Jack Catchprice, Grandma's eldest son, a sleek, successful businessman in Sydney, has managed to escape the family trap of defeat, and the dilapidated house behind the dealership.

Into this grotesque oubliette arrives Maria, an auditor for the Australian tax department – beautiful, hugely pregnant, and unmarried – who takes her job with stern, uncompromising seriousness: she hates people who fiddle with their taxes, especially the rich who brag about their loopholes, and she stalks their transgressions with an iron will. She soon realizes that both the Catchprice business and the family are in a hopeless state of dishevelment and self-destruction, but she is determined to do her job and, against her better judgment, becomes insidiously involved with the awful clan as she keeps returning in a futile effort to inspect the books.

Throughout the mare's-nest plot of *The Tax Inspector*, it's clear that Peter Carey intends the soberly conscientious Maria to serve as the moral counterbalance – the sane figure of reality – to Catchprice decrepitude and madness; every member of this tribe is skewed in some terribly irreversible way, from nutty Grandma to the diabolical Benny. Yet although we can understand the role Carey means Maria to play in his scheme, she never becomes a convincingly realized character. Although Peter Carey claimed, in a recent interview, that the original impulse behind this novel was his outrage against the cheating rich, what really interests him is the trashiness of Australian low life represented by the Catchprices. Carey is a master of the smirk-and-snigger school of black comedy, and for this he pulls out all the stops.

He is inordinately attentive to the prevailing junk and detritus of Australian life, the demented illusions of people like the Catchprices, in all their twisted nastiness. He is uncannily alert to smells and manages to

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sniff a foul odor on just about every page, to nail down the fetid atmosphere of this Sydney suburb: this "second-rate landscape" that lacks "a single building or street . . . that might suggest beauty or happiness." But instead of being moved by the moral and physical pathology he portrays so fanatically, we recoil: there's a broad streak of sadistic brutality to Carey's imagination that overwhelms his loftier intentions. In the finale of *The Tax Inspector*, when Benny lures Maria into his malodorous basement lair and threatens to kill her as she is giving birth, we shudder not only at the horror of the situation, but at Carey's all too obvious relish for the rebarbative leaps of his imagination. He's a very clever and skillful writer, but in the end he seems much too pleased with his own macabre ingenuity.

Martin Amis's restless ingenuity trips him up in a more serious way in *Time's Arrow*, a laborious attempt to be "original" about the Holocaust – hardly a subject that lends itself to the artful devisings of literary contrivance, or the sardonic bray of satire that has characterized his earlier work. In his new novel Amis has literally bent over backwards to be different. Reversing the order of time, Amis's portrait of a Nazi doctor, assistant to Mengele in Auschwitz, begins with his death and ends with his birth, taking him from his final days in California through years of medical practice in Boston and New York, to hiding out in Portugal and Italy after the war, to Auschwitz, medical school, and birth in Solingen, where Eichmann, too, was born. Conversations run from end to start, seagulls fly in reverse, corpses come to life. Since the doctor is incorrigibly priapic, the sexual implications of the backward scheme are obvious.

Amis attempts to underscore the gravity of his undertaking by splitting the consciousness of his protagonist: The narrator is the soul of the Nazi doctor – the confused, jauntily colloquial voice of conscience, unaware of the murderous, unrepentant body that maimed and destroyed its victims in the camps. Through the separation of body and soul Amis tries to drive home his point that the conscience of the doctor was totally cut off from, and thus unable to comprehend or atone for, the atrocities committed by his physical being. But does the backward narration in any way intensify the evil of this doctor's life? On the contrary, what the reverse action makes dismayingly clear is the bag-of-tricks gamesmanship that inspired this grievously misguided approach to the Holocaust. We can only wince, and worse, at the gallows facetiousness that brings dead bodies to life with poisonous injections and fire. "I saw the old Jew float to the surface of the deep latrine, how he splashed and struggled into life, and was hoisted out by the jubilant guards, his clothes cleansed by the mire." Such manipulative "irony" denies the essential horror of Auschwitz, which is that the Jews struggled not into life but into death.

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As he informs us in his afterword, Amis leaned heavily on Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* in writing *Time's Arrow, or The Nature of the Offense*. The subtitle is in fact Levi's phrase. Indeed, the only genuinely chilling words in this novel – "Here there is no why," which begin the Auschwitz chapter – have also been appropriated from Levi. In his memoir of the camp, Levi recalls plucking an icicle from a window only to have it snatched away by a guard. When he asked "*Warum?*" the guard replied "*Hier ist kein warum.*" Those four simple words convey more about the Holocaust than all of Amis's backward-running narrative, which, in violating the order of cause and effect, trivializes what he has exploited but failed to comprehend. And that is the nature of his offense.

Three years ago Julian Barnes slyly pretended to take on a very big subject and polished it off with characteristically witty finesse in *A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters*. Of course it wasn't really a history, nor did it have a great deal to say about "the world." Starting with Noah's Ark, Barnes proceeded to hop, skip, and jump through the centuries by means of an eccentric omnium-gatherum of narrators: movie star, woodworm, terrorist victim, religious astronaut, Americans, etc. As the illiterate dustman in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* remarked about the man he hired to read to him, "He do the police in different voices," and Julian Barnes, an even more nimble ventriloquist, can do any voice he fancies. In *Flaubert's Parrot* he could "do" Flaubert as effortlessly as he could become the voice of the doctor obsessed with Flaubert. And in his new novel, *Talking It Over*, he has given this ventriloquial talent the freest rein yet.

History, in one or ten or less than half a chapter, has now been left behind as the three principal characters, in alternating monologues, tell their sad and very English story. Oliver and Stuart have been friends since schooldays, though they are as different as wine and water. Oliver is a flamboyant cynic, hiding massive self-doubt behind his glittering verbal facade, a clever non-stop talker of dazzling virtuosity who likes to "scatter *bon mots* like sunflower seeds." Incurably ironic, mocking everything other people take seriously, he is forever shamelessly cadging money and drinks from salt-of-the-earth types like Stuart. Though Oliver has a university degree, the only job he's been able to hang on to – and that only barely – is teaching English to foreigners at a grubby third-rate language school. What he is good at is the staccato rattle of clever words that quickly melt into air:

> Have I told you my Theory of Life, by the way? Life is like invading Russia. A blitz start, massed shakos, plumes dancing like a flustered

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> henhouse; a period of svelte progress recorded in ebullient despatches as the enemy falls back; then the beginning of a long, morale-sapping trudge with rations getting shorter and the first snowflakes upon your face. The enemy burns Moscow and you yield to General January. . . .

And this is the way he talks *all the time*.

Stuart, without a university degree, plods away at a steady if uninspiring job as investment banker. Through a dating service he meets Gillian, who restores paintings for museums and is as reticent and quiet as Oliver is noisily talkative. Early on in the story, Gillian complains: "Wherever you turn nowadays there are people who insist on spilling out their lives at you. . . . Why can't they simply get on with things? Why do they have to *talk* about it all?" (But this is exactly what Barnes has them doing page after page.) In short order Stuart and Gillian marry, and at their wedding Oliver falls in love with the bride. In a cleverly devised campaign, he then cadges his best friend's wife, along with his whiskey and the odd handout. Love, he now tells us, suppressing his habitual contempt for such earnest pronouncements about Life, is the one bright truth:

> *Love, etc.* The proposition is simple. The world divides into two categories: those who believe that the purpose, the function, the bass pedal and principal melody of life is love, and that everything else – *everything* else – is merely an *etc.*: and those, those unhappy many, who believe primarily in the *etc.* of life, for whom love, however agreeable, is but a passing flurry of youth, the pattering prelude to nappy-duty, but not something as solid, steadfast, and reliable as, say, home decoration. This is the only division between people that counts.

Suddenly the biter's bit, the cynic displaced by the man of grand passion. With only a faint rustle of guilt, Gillian divorces Stuart and marries Oliver. But they don't live happily ever after, in part because Stuart literally begins to haunt them, a silent figure of reproach at their wedding, later in a hotel room from whose window he can watch their comings and goings after they move to France. More telling, though, is the change in Gillian's idea of Oliver now that they are bound in domesticity: "He seemed terribly exotic when I first met him; now he seems less colorful." Eventually, in a desperate move – she deliberately provokes Oliver into striking her in public – Gillian manages to appease her ex-husband, who will now presumably leave them in tattered peace. End of novel.

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What does Julian Barnes want his readers to make of this irredeemably thin story? It's hard to say, since the book consists entirely of talk, talk, talk. But after a while we do begin to sense, beneath his characters' chatter, the presence of the novelist, his very cool dispassion and detachment from the persons and sorrows he has set in motion. And this detachment, in turn, reduces the entire novel to a game whose supposed truth and consequences it is impossible to care about one way or another. Even the title is – perhaps deliberately – misleading: The three parts of the love triangle don't "talk it over," they don't share feelings or thoughts; they talk *at* an invisible listener – presumably the reader – who never answers back. They are locked in the impenetrable isolation of their monologues. Even Oliver's brilliant and quicksilver wit soon begins to pall, as all the disembodied voices are shorn of whatever living reality they seemed at first to possess. Since Barnes makes little effort in *Talking It Over* to engage our emotions in the fate of his characters, to make what happens to them matter to us, this novel in the end seems an exasperating waste of Barnes' restless intelligence, that subtly mischievous, languid amorality that he has put to much richer use in his previous novels.

Darryl Pinckney is the most astute and independent-minded critic of black literature in America today. In trenchant essays about such revered figures as Alice Walker and Countee Cullen, he has raised hackles by refusing to be intimidated by orthodox pieties about race and gender. Pinckney has now published his first novel, *High Cotton*, which reads less like imaginative fiction than a thinly disguised autobiography of an exceptionally precocious and high-spirited young man, born in 1953 into a black family in Indianapolis. More *Bildung* than *roman*, the book takes its title from the folk saying "If you're chopping in high cotton, you've got it easier." In other words, the higher the social class, the better the life: *High Cotton* portrays a world very different from the more familiar accounts, fictional or otherwise, about the black experience in America.

Pinckney comes from what W. E. B. DuBois called "the talented tenth" – the educated and socially mobile segment of black society. His world is not the Spike Lee inner-city ghetto of poverty and despair, but an eminently respectable upper-middle-class black family in which four generations have earned college degrees. As the narrator tells us at the start, "No one sat me down and told me I was a Negro. That was something I figured out on the sly." But as he learns soon enough, being part of "the talented tenth" does not absolve him from wrestling with the problems of blackness, even if he cannot share the older generations' anxious vigilance about the slings and arrows of outrageous bigotry.

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What the young hero of *High Cotton* struggles to convey is the confusion and uncertainty about his race and status that someone born into the black elite in the early fifties had to try and sort out. When the family moves to the suburbs, the nameless narrator describes himself as one of the Also Chosen – the small number of black students in a predominantly white school. His immediate tactic is to deny there's anything special about his situation, with a wry proviso: "There was nothing to be afraid of as long as we were polite and made good grades. . . . You were just as good as anyone else out there, but they – whoever 'they' were – had rigged things so that you had to be close to perfect just to break even."

The tension between his nonchalant affectation of indifference and the intractable reality of race is put to the test when, in adolescence, he visits relatives in the South, which he calls "The Old Country." There the lines demarcating black and white are not as conveniently blurred as they seemed to be in Indiana:

> The Old South became a sort of generalized stuffy room. . . . It wasn't safe to explore the South. The old-timers themselves discouraged too much curiosity about what lay beyond the gate. It was a place of secrets, of what black people knew and what white people didn't. . . . Meanwhile, television passed on its pictures, the connecting tissue. The representations survived the subject and eventually overtook my own images, which were less durable than waxwork figures in an exhibition of Black Life at the Smithsonian.

Since *High Cotton* is constructed, in the manner of autobiography, of self-enclosed episodes that represent the stages of a developing life, it is sometimes hard to discern the thread – other than the wry tone of the narrator – that connects these events. Whatever tenuous unity exists comes from the fascinating figure of the young man's Grandfather Eustace. He, not the mercurial and nameless narrator, is the most fully realized character in the book, the one who represents a view of his race and identity that the narrator thinks he can neither share nor entirely reject with impunity. "I spent much of my life running from him, centripetal fashion, because he was, to me, just a poor old darky" who came from the Old Country – Georgia. What "old darky" means in this context is not some shuffling stereotype from *Gone With the Wind* but a man whose view of blackness his grandson thinks obsolete, intransigently resistant to the changing times. A graduate of Harvard and Brown, Grandfather Eustace became a Congregationalist minister, always eloquently spoken and elegantly dressed, an awful snob who rarely visited

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his grandson's family because they lived on the wrong side of Indianapolis, "right there with the hoi polloi." What his race meant to Grandfather was elementary: he was black at a time when everyone was white and it was his duty "to pass on the record of alienated majesty" to his descendants.

As his grandson moves into the revolutions of the sixties, assaulted in equal parts by condescension, celebration, and hostility, he finds Grandfather's notions more and more unacceptable. With his highly developed sense of comic irony, he often offends his solemn black classmates, but he is also eager to have "the social satisfaction of being a Black Power advocate in a suburban high school." Yet he can't let go of the feeling "that everything all-Negro, separate, and tribal was a corral, and anything white a great opening-up to the general dance." Torn by what he calls his "Popular Front mentality" he seesaws between pride in his blackness and chronic resistance to being part of a Movement that is inimical to ironic detachment.

Neither irony nor ellipitcal detachment provided much comfort when he entered Columbia in the early seventies, years after "the golden days of '68." He searches out the Harlem scene yet can't feel himself to be part of it. But he discovers soon enough that being black in New York is not the same as being black in Indiana. Staying on in the city after graduation, he finally gets a dose of the racism he had more or less escaped back home and, characteristically, finds some comedy in the ugliness:

> Taxi drivers would not stop for me after dark, white girls jogged to keep ahead of my shadow thrown at their heels by the amber streetlamps. Part of me didn't blame them, but most of me was hurt. I carried props into the subway – the latest *Semiotext(e)*, a hefty volume of the Frankfurt School – so that the employed would not get the wrong idea or, more to the point, the usual idea about me. . . . That Bicentennial summer I got over it.

But it was not so easy to get over the racism of the aged Djuna Barnes, the legendary relic of the avant-garde twenties who hired him one summer to run errands and be generally useful. One day she orders him to wash out a blouse, and he refuses. "She started to say that she didn't understand why blacks had become so touchy, caught herself. . . . but I knew what she meant." He walks out and decides to write a caustic attack on every writer who ever wrote a disparaging word about blacks.

When that proves impossible, he finds another menial job, and then

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goes on to some predictable adventures in London and Paris. But Pinckney regains his stride toward the end of the book, when the young man in search of authenticity but distrustful of enthusiasm and wary of commitment returns to the Old Country on a visit which induces very different thoughts and feelings than those he had as a child. The mournful reverie of the closing pages, as he walks over the bridge from Georgia into South Carolina, reveals a soul no less divided than in his earlier years, but fiercely honest about the understanding he has reached, not without difficulty, about his blackness and himself as an individual in relation to his race. In a beautifully unsentimental passage toward the end of the novel, Pinckney writes: "I minded the strict rules of conduct and the tribal code that said that I, as a black, had a responsibility to my people, to honor the race. Now I am sorry that I went to such lengths not to be of much use to myself just so no one would be able to ask anything of me. To have nothing to offer was not, after all, the best way to have nothing to lose." No longer teetering on the ambiguous knife-edge of irony, our young hero is now free to grow up.

The blacks who appear in Norman Rush's *Mating* are African and of course have nothing in common with Darryl Pinckney's world. They form the context of the story, and play minor roles now and then, but they are only incidental to the romance – the quest for a mate – at the heart of the book. Like the narrator of *High Cotton*, the woman whose voice we hear throughout *Mating* remains nameless: while Pinckney is obviously writing about himself, the anonymity maintained in *Mating* is a puzzling annoyance. Is she nameless because Rush sees her as Everywoman? That can hardly be the case, since she is absolutely one of a kind, suigenerical, as our heroine might put it, to a fault. She is, in fact, the most beguiling, exasperating, funny and endearing woman to appear in a work of fiction for years. That she is the creation of a male novelist, who insinuates himself so effortlessly into her mind and soul and body, is all the more remarkable.

Our nameless heroine is a nutritional anthropologist in her early thirties who has come to Botswana in 1980 from Stanford to do her thesis research on the link between fertility and the seasonal food supply in a tribe of hunters and gatherers. To her dismay, she discovers that her gatherers are now eating cornflakes and canned beans supplied by relief agencies, which effectively blows her thesis out of the water. Ferociously self-questioning and self-analytical, she decides, after a visit to the Victoria Falls that fills her with "enormous sadness" about loneliness and mortality, that she needs a man who will fill the gaping hole in her life without threatening her feminist dedication to independence and dignity.

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Not the sort of man she's been casually sleeping with in Africa, but one whose intellectual seriousness and sophistication can match and challenge her own. As she puts it, "I grew up clinging to the idea that either I was an original in an unappreciated way or that I could be original – this later – by incessant striving and reading and taking simple precautions like never watching television again in my life." She is nothing if not determined.

At a party in Gabarone, the capital of Bostswana, she has her first sight of the handsome and charismatic paragon who will more than fulfill her requisites for the mate she craves. He is Nelson Denoon, a famous specialist in Third World rural development, with dozens of books to his credit, who is the guiding force of a utopian community, Tsau, in the Kalahari Desert, run mainly by once destitute and abandoned black women of Botswana. As she listens to Denoon's informal lecture to the guests about his ideas for village development, she realizes that he is the one, and, "at heart a congenital academic," as she admits, her love song takes a comically grad-student form: "He was so interdisciplinary! Economics, anthropology, economic anthropology, you name it in the policy sciences, not to mention development proper and" much, much more along these lines. But in fact the intellectual crackle of her 477-page monologue is generally much richer than this echo of a college catalogue. And when Denoon offers his famous dictum – "Capitalism is strangling black Africa. Socialism will bury her!" – she finds his words strangely erotic.

After this first ecstatic taste of Denoon, she is so obsessed with the pursuit of intellectual love that she recklessly decides to trek alone across the desert to Tsau, and comes close to ruining her health in the attempt. Once she gets there, the mating dance begins, though it takes a long while to consummate. And as they go through the motions, we learn a great deal about the matriarchal organization of Tsau, the way its solar technology works, the kind of food plantings the women harvest, the way they dress, how the houses are decorated. Like Richard Powers, Norman Rush pours a great deal of information into his story, but in Rush's case, unlike Powers', the overflowing cornucopia of detail is intrinsic to his fictional scheme, even when it has more than a few *longueurs*. As the narrator ruefully admits at one point, "My story is turning into the map in Borges exactly the size of the country it represents, but I feel I should probably say everything." And indeed she does.

What revives our interest throughout, though, is the high-flown sparring and feinting between the lovers – yes, they do become lovers eventually – and the extraordinary wit and range of ideas that Rush nimbly packs into their comments and observations, often literary, always at the highest level of high culture. The range of intellectual figures that

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crop up in their unending conversation is extraordinary: from Ovid to the Hungarian economist Janos Kornai.

Rush is fully aware that all this has its comic side, and he makes the most of it. At one point, a crisis occurs over whether Denoon lied to the nameless one when he claimed to have read *Middlemarch* (he did lie; she forgives him). She tells us she carries a paperback Boswell everywhere "as a fallback in case I broke a leg somewhere where reading matter was a problem." At another point she warns gullible women: "One thing you distinctly never want to hear a man you're interested in say softly is that his favorite book in the whole world is *The Golden Notebook*. Here you are dealing with a liar from the black lagoon. . . . " When they quarrel, she accuses Denoon of "giving me cognitive dissonance, so stop it." He is shocked that she's never heard of Ignazio Silone; she becomes impatient with his depressions about the state of affairs in Poland. But she loves him because he's such an impeccable feminist, he would never use the imperative mode to a woman unless she were in the path of a runaway bus. When serious trouble threatens this perfect meeting of minds, she blames it, characteristically, on the shortcomings of anthropology.

If this description makes the reading of *Mating* seem an ordeal, that is unfair to Norman Rush, who has clearly forgotten nothing about his five years in Africa with the Peace Corps. For he has written a superbly witty and engrossing erotic comedy which is also an academic satire, a novel of ideas about many serious matters and, above all, a portrait of an arresting woman who will remain deeply etched in our minds. In *Mating* Rush has proven himself a master of what John Updike has defined as "depicted realities to which meaning clings, and which transfer this meaning . . . to our consciousness." The realities that Norman Rush has woven into an invented world take such tenacious possession of our imaginations that it becomes part of our own reality.

Over the past twenty-odd years, Robert Stone has staked out a powerful claim, in five novels, to the grim authenticity of his vision of the American present. His vagrant men and women lead lives of noisy desperation at the edge of the abyss. Strung out, doped up, hung over, they are nearing the end of their rope. Stone's favorite noun is *dread*, his favorite tone is *mordant*, his favorite adjective is *dangerous*, with *disturbing* and *sinister* not far behind. In *Dog Soldiers* and *A Flag at Sunrise*, Stone sought to underscore the political implications of his narrative, through heavily admonitory symbolism, offering his jittery world of addiction and panic as a counter-image of American society in the waning years of the century – corrupt, paranoid, out of control. In the sixties Stone was involved in the California counterculture, and some glib remnants of those

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psychedelic days have clung to his novels. But this political undercurrent, with its simple-minded judgments about American "imperialism," is not what makes Stone such an original: after all, apocalyptic nightmare has been summoned up in so many novels it has become as mechanical as the Victorian happy ending. What sets Robert Stone apart from the other chroniclers of demoralization and *anomie* is the brilliant intensity of his prose, which combines the metaphorically ornate and the low-life colloquial with such supple ease, and his vibrant skill as a storyteller.

In his new novel, *Outerbridge Reach*, Stone is much less preoccupied than he has previously been with personal breakdown and corruption as cautionary images of public disintegration and the moral failings of American life. For once his principal character is a solid citizen, square, politically conservative, devoted to his wife and teen-age daughter. The malaise that claws Owen Browne is a matter of private "rages and regrets," a vague feeling of "rebellion against things," not a disenchanted indictment of the society at large. A graduate of the Naval Academy, Browne has disquieting memories of his service in Vietnam, though Stone does not linger over the war that was the diseased heart of *Dog Soldiers*.

When he left the Navy, Browne took an unsatisfying job writing advertising brochures for a yacht builder in Connecticut, part of the shaky financial empire of a flamboyant rogue entrepreneur who disappears just as he is about to embark on a solo round-the-world race in one of his company's sailboats. When Browne is offered his boss's place in the race, he eagerly accepts even though he has had little experience of solo sailing, and certainly none on a global scale. But despite his wife's and his own foreboding about the risk he will be taking, the race seems exactly the opportunity Browne has been hoping for, a way of shedding the canker of paralysis and despair that has been gnawing at his soul, a means of recapturing the heroic dreams of his youth.

No novel of Robert Stone's is without its figure of evil, and the snake in *Outerbridge Reach* is a documentary film-maker, Ron Strickland, hired by Browne's company to make a movie about the race. Strickland leads us back into familiar Stone territory: a cynic without a shred of conscience or moral vitality, vaguely left-wing but fundamentally contemptuous of everything including politics. A ruthless womanizer, he seduces Browne's wife Anne after her husband sails away, determined to flout her idealistic pretensions and break through her mask of respectability, and it's not long before she's sunk to his amoral level.

The narrative shuttles between sea and land, in chapters alternating between Browne's mounting inability to control his boat, which after a bad storm he realizes is a piece of junk, and Anne Browne's drunken

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deterioration as her fragile resistance to Strickland caves in. After weeks of water-borne solitude, Browne begins to hallucinate and falls ill. After dropping anchor at a ghostly island near Tristan da Cunha, he knows that his hope of victory is doomed. In a desperate last gasp, he falsifies his position in his radio bulletins. But the prospect of living out his lie pushes him, literally, over the edge, and he lets the sea close over him. "He could no more take a prize by subterfuge than he could sail to the white port city of his dreams."

It is a terrifying story, studded with literary allusions to Shakespeare, Melville, Hart Crane, even Henley's "Invictus," all of which Stone knits with seamless dexterity into his text. The metaphoric intensity of Stone's descriptions of the sea is at times almost unbearable, though at other moments the symbol-devising hand of the author lies too heavily and obtrusively on the page: the Outerbridge Reach of the title, for instance, a derelict salvage yard off Staten Island, filled with rotting tugboats and marine debris, which Browne comes upon early in the story. When the rats start scurrying all too predictably at the edge of this "phantom disaster," it's hard not to feel at such moments that Stone is parodying himself.

If in the end *Outerbridge Reach*, for all its unnerving dramatic power, does not try to confront the profound philosophic questions about human destiny, about character as fate, that Conrad drew from the sea, Stone has nonetheless defined the limits of his expectations. As he confided in a recent interview, "I see this enormous empty space from which God has absented himself. I see this enormous mystery that I can't penetrate, a mystery before which I'm silent and uncomprehending. This . . . is where I find myself in my sixth decade."

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DARIUSZ TOLCZYK

POETICS AND POLITICS

Russian literary criticism waits for its own *The Captive Mind*, in which the problem of various writers' attraction to communism, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, would be given as expansive study as Czeslaw Milosz's gave to Eastern European writers and Stalinist dogmas. Yet does the problem of a writer's attraction to communism still pertain to literary criticism? Can it be described in literary terms, or is its only literary context in the fact that we are aware of the political choices of writers? At least in some cases, there does exist a crucial connection between the parameters of literary expression assumed by a writer and his ideological options. For if we treat the parameters of literary expression as remaining in an inseparable relationship to a writer's philosophical model of the universe – either consciously assumed or, perhaps more often, immanently implied in a chosen descriptive strategy – then the question of a writer's ideological choices ceases to be an extraliterary one.

The work of the post-realist Soviet writer Yuri Olesha (1899–1960) embodies such a close mutual conditioning between poetical and political options. The contradictions in his peculiar combination of ideological and poetic assumptions contributed to, if not determined, Olesha's artistic fate. The literary preoccupations of nineteenth-century Russian sentimentalist and realist poetics were consequential to Olesha's development, and the nineteenth-century writers' conception of nature is reflected in his own ideological appropriation of the concepts of truth and beauty.

Modern Russian prose began in the 1790s with Nikolai Karamzin. It owes him not only its original secular idiom but also its "sentimental education." Karamzin's sentimentalist works confronted the Russian reader with an entirely new sensibility and immediately reverberated in the culture. Soon, Karamzinian literary heroes and heroines became the models for many real-life contemporary lovers. Never before had Russia experienced a literary fashion of such powerful appeal.

The title heroine of the most famous of all Karamzin's novellas, *Poor Liza*, a sentimental peasant girl, confesses to her mother, "Ah, mother dear! What a beautiful morning. How cheerful everything is in the field! Never have the larks sung so well, never has the sun shone so brightly, never have the flowers smelled so pleasant!" Liza speaks in the

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elegant Karamzinian idiom, convincingly enough to make her mother realize the beauty of the morning. "In actuality," Karamzin writes, "[the morning] seemed exceedingly pleasant to her; her dear daughter had through her own cheer made all of nature cheerful for her." Of course, it was neither nature, nor morning, nor larks that changed so suddenly and became more beautiful. What changed was Liza herself, who had fallen in love. Several pages later in the story, she would explain it to Erast, a nobleman from Moscow whom she loves and who was not yet aware that he would eventually abandon her for a rich Moscow lady: "Without your eyes the bright moon is dark; without your voice the nightingale's singing is boring; without your breathing the light breeze is unpleasant for me."

The age of sentiment was a time when Nature (capitalized and treated as a persona) was portrayed as being responsive to human feelings, especially the feelings of lovers. Artists had traditionally tried to convince readers that certain people could see, hear, or feel reality more acutely than ordinary people could. Schopenhauer later was to philosophically undermine this notion of human harmony with nature, but earlier than his influence on Russian literature (for example, in 1859 he strongly inspired Turgenev, who recommended him to Herzen), the radicals of the 1840s were calling into question the idea of the artist-contemplator who claimed to have achieved an intimate relationship with nature. Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48), an influential critic of contemporary literature, preferred mediocre but democratic literature rather than work by aristocrats of the spirit who aspired to esoteric heights. In this period, poets began to lose their authority over Russian literary life. While brought about by a complex combination of factors, literary as well as extraliterary, this phenomenon may be seen as a sign that the literary audience's trust in those writers who tried to document their intimate relationship with nature by means of metaphors was waning.

To the new critics who called themselves realists, metaphor, based on a hierarchic combination of reality, was not only an old-fashioned stylistic device but also subjective and therefore not verifiable; it did not match contemporary categories of truth. The new mode of "democratic" writing favored metonymy. Metonymy, based on the temporal and spatial juxtapositions among its elements, could fulfil aims coincident with those of the language of science. Metonymy could present an object through a verifiable explanation of its relationships to other objects in a one-level empirical universe.This diametric change of perspective deeply influenced the artist's relationship to nature: a traditional reservoir of metaphors and a model for human harmony became an object for human expansion. Both the scientist and the writer were determined to incarcerate nature in the net of temporal and spatial cate-

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gories. The hero of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons,* the young materialist Bazarov, put it briefly (in what became one of the most often quoted maxims in Russian literature): "Nature is not a temple but a workshop."

This new view of nature brought a new metaphysical problem. The early critics of Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, for instance, consumed by polemics over Bazarov's political radicalism, did not quite realize that this late patron of the nihilists paid a terrible price in the novel for his views. Indeed, the seeds of literary revolution were already present in the ground of realistic poetics. In Turgenev's novel nature is deaf and dumb for Bazarov, and this silence of nature is tragically portrayed by Turgenev. Bazarov's ability to love was doubtful; his deficiencies were self-inflicted, a result of his lack of beliefs. The last scene of *Fathers and Sons* shows us the grave of this unfulfilled "conqueror" of nature. He, unlike Karamzin's Liza, died without the compassionate silence of birds, and flowers blossomed on his grave, quite indifferent to the sadness of his death.

Turgenev's *A Hunter's Sketches* was considered almost a model of realistic writing. Yet its ambivalence toward the poetics of realism is present at a deeper level in the stories. "Biryuk" opens: "I was coming back from hunting one evening alone in a droshky." The very first sentence gives a great deal of information; we have in it time, direction, cause, circumstances, a precise quantification of motion, and purpose. The narrator keeps adding information: "I was eight versts from home. . . . A thunderstorm was coming on. In front, a huge purplish storm cloud slowly rose from behind the forest; long gray rain clouds raced over my head. . . ." The presence of all the objects mentioned here is explainable in terms of temporal and spatial relationships. The narrator himself is a necessary point of reference, a "camera" which notices objects in a visual relationship to itself ("in front," "over my head,"). His perception gives the impression of consequential objectivity. Then, a storm comes and the light suddenly changes, blurring the images seen by the narrator-protagonist. He decides to hide under the trees next to a path. But "suddenly, in a flash of lightning, I saw a tall figure on the road. I stared intently in that direction – and again the figure seemed to spring out of the ground near my droshky."

"To spring out of the ground" is a colloquialism in the Russian language and not a literary metaphor to be taken seriously. But if we read it seriously, perhaps this expression is not unintentional to the author whose narration slips from an objective, matter-of-fact monologuethe worn-out metaphor. Could it be a more or less literal report of what is happening to the narrator? It is noteworthy that the narrator, having lost his ability to see in the poor and distorted visibility

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the storm has created, really does see a silhouette coming from under the earth. Claiming that the man appeared at the path from somewhere else other than from under the earth would be, in fact, an abandonment of the empirical principle of the narration in favor of some previous knowledge as a source more reliable than the concrete visual experience. What was meant to be the basis of consequential, almost scientific objectivism became in fact subjective. Our senses perceive images other than our sober reason expects; this truth, customarily associated with the turn away from realism in twentieth-century abstract art, was already present on a deeper level in realistic writing of the nineteenth century.

Yuri Olesha created his most important works in the 1920s. The Impressionist painters' discoveries, undermining the notion of sensual "objectivity" in art, were already well known and had already become the foundation of avant-guard movements. Turgenev's droshky comes to mind again upon reading Yevgeny Zamyatin's 1922 essay, "On Synthetism":

> Yesterday and today are a stagecoach and an automobile.
>
> Yesterday you traveled along the steppe road by unhurried stagecoach. A slow wanderer – a village church – is floating toward you. Unhurriedly, you open the window; you narrow your eyes against the steeple gleaming in the sun, the whiteness of the walls; you rest your eyes on the blue slits of sky; you will remember the green roof,the lacy sleeves of the weeping birch, like the sleeves of a oriental robe, the solitary woman leaning against the birch.
>
> And today – by car – past the same church. A moment – it rises, flashes, disappears. And all that remains is a streak of lightning in the air, topped with a cross; beneath it, three sharp black shapes cut the sky, one over the other, and a woman-birch, a woman with weeping branches. Not a single secondary detail, not a single superfluous line, not a word that can be crossed out. Nothing but the essence, the extract, the synthesis, revealed to the eye within one-hundredth of a second, when all sensations are gathered into focus, sharpened, condensed.

In one of the best known among Olesha's stories, "Love," the protagonist Shuvalov sees nature in images which Turgenev, despite his tendency towards impressionism, would never admit.

> He came out into an open space and sat down on the stump of a tree. Insects flew all around him. The grass quivered. The architectural flight of the birds, flies, lady-birds seemed curiously unreal; but he discerned the shapes they made in their flight – dotted lines, contours

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> of arches, bridges,towers, terraces – a whole city quickly changing, every second altering its shape.

Instead of explaining the causes of the fly's flight, its direction and circumstances, as Turgenev would do, Shuvalov succumbs to the magic of free associations generated by an unruly nature. Shuvalov is somebody who perceives nature, as Zamyatin would call it, "in its synthesis revealed to the eye," but who, at the same time, attempts to recreate some notion of subjective order that would perhaps make nature more human. He is a lover of nature who tries to grasp and preserve that which "rises, flashes, and disappears."

Olesha's literary method may be said to apply the principles of Russian formalism. Under these principles, if our eye, in the light of a lightning bolt, notices a figure coming from under the earth, we write that the figure came from under the earth, forgetting about the rationalistic censorship of our mind which suggests putting "as if" before the description of what is seen. This strategy is based upon the assumption that the categories of practical reason shed not light but darkness upon our perceptions. Olesha was reiterating an already entrenched truth, that nature is full of miracles unnoticed by most people who, according to the theories of the Bazarovs, had changed nature's temple into a workshop. According to Olesha and the formalists, language itself kept people from noticing the miracle of reality.When Olesha's Shuvalov falls in love, he becomes able to fly, in defiance of the laws of physics. In the story, he is observed to be "flying on the wings of love," in spite of the fact that this image is metaphorical and therefore, strictly speaking, not true. Olesha's early stories attempt to reestablish the literal meaning of metaphors and to prove that metaphor is the only possible way to communicate the sensual experience of reality.

Critics in the 1920s, trying to describe Olesha's technique, noticed that it was based on an indirect visual perception of objects reflected, in unusual light, through their shadows. His technique, later adopted by other writers and labeled revolutionary, has since become commonplace through repeated use. In Olesha's case, however, he put this technique into practice in his life, dissolving some of the conventional borders between art and life.

When Olesha's character Shuvalov has his fantastic vision of insects flying as if in a city in the air, he also experiences a sudden anxiety:

> "They are beginning to have power over me," he thought. "The sphere of my vision is becoming polluted by them. . . . What has got hold of me? I am beginning to see things which don't exist.

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This kind of anxiety would be impossible in the world of Karamzin's Liza. Shuvalov, however, like Turgenev's Bazarov, lives in a post-Schopenhauerian world: there is nothing surprising in his fear of being seduced by nature. If for Liza nature was a good mother who responded to her feelings, Shuvalov is not sure whether nature is a mother or a merciless stepmother who seduces him with her colors and beauty. Anyone entering into an intimate relationship with this suspect nature is always alone. No one will either confirm or deny the veracity of his vision: contemplating reality involves a rejection of the organizing categories of practical reason and also the opportunity to verify and communicate perceptions. And like a mystical experience, it can never be shared. An artist, a lover, a child, a sick person – those holding keys to the mysteries of nature – are the heroes in Olesha's writing. Olesha himself belonged to that group of writers who tended to live in their art. These writers could be thought of as either aristocrats of the spirit or outcasts, depending upon how their audience treated them. Since no objective verification of the artist's vision is possible, a writer's audience, looking into his work for some notion of truth, must either take it on faith or reject it.

Olesha's heroes constantly turn to other people, "normal" people, for confirmation of their strange visions, and they are always rejected. "I cannot write not having found an analogy between you and me," Olesha confessed, while addressing his imaginary reader at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. Loneliness and uncertainty seem to be inseparable from the fate of the artist who cannot relinquish his visions, unless the whole society turns to him and shares his vision.

This dream of recognition became one of the most powerful among Russian artists, especially those in the avant-garde of the Revolution. As history proved, the temptation of being aristocrats of the spirit was, for many of them, so attractive that they eagerly forgot what it was that had set them apart, that is, their very visions. Olesha was a peculiar case. When his hero, Shuvalov, succumbing to the beauty of nature, says, "I am living in Paradise," a man sitting nearby asks him, "Are you really a Marxist?" When Shuvalov answers yes, the man retorts, "Then you can't possibly be living in Paradise." Olesha tried to convince everyone, and himself most of all, that it was indeed possible. In 1934, at the First Congress of Soviet Writers, where socialist realism was irrevocably pronounced the only correct way of writing in the Soviet Union and all discussion were once and for all closed, Olesha spoke, ". . . the relations between an artist and nature are such that she reveals some of her secrets to him, and she is more sociable with him than with others." He sounded as if he sincerely believed in what he was saying. Furthermore, he could present to the commissars and literary bosses his metaphors as

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undeniable proof of the truth. One can certainly speculate about whether Olesha was naive enough to believe that the literary bosses at the Congress would treat his words seriously. Did he expect them to forget for a moment the five-year plan and rediscover the world while reading his metaphors? His two goals as an artist – to contemplate the beauty of nature in its hallucinatory revelations and to achieve some confirmation for the true nature of his vision – stood in mutual contradiction. Olesha could not overcome the terror of being seduced and deceived by his genuine but unverifiable experience of reality. Yet he could not resist the powerful attraction of this experience and failed to capitulate in order to have his literary vision confirmed by society at large.

Like many of his contemporaries, Olesha seemed to believe, at least before the First Congress of the Soviet Writers, that the post-revolutionary period was an entirely new era of social history and that a place for the artist-seer would be found in the new reality. If nature could not be entirely trusted, then history would become the new authority. The new world was to be built on a belief in the infallibility of history. Nadezhda Mandelshtam, in her memoirs, described the atmosphere of this belief in history, which dominated Russian intellectual life in the twenties and thirties:

> We had really been persuaded that we had entered a new era, and that we had no choice but to submit to historical inevitability, which in any case was only another name for the dreams of all those who had ever fought for human happiness. Propaganda for historical determinism had deprived us of our will and the power to make our own judgments. We laughed in the faces of the doubters. . . .

If history supported the artist with its authority, as many thought, it would give to the artist's vision a new objective sense. Then the artist could truly approach Paradise and not only take pleasure in the contemplation but also would know that his visions would find some confirmation in the framework of the objective, historical concept of reality. It was true that the "usefulness of the artist at the current stage of historical development" did not equal the Karamzinian "aristocracy of spirit," but nothing better seemed available and, after all, one had to start with something. However, in order to be accepted by those who were driving the locomotive of history, one had to appear serious, to make an impression that one believed in what one saw and wrote and that there was some link between one's vision and the "objective truth." Olesha probably expected that he would be listened to at the First Congress, when he came up with his vision of socialism:

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> . . . the new social attitude towards the world is, in its purest sense, a human attitude. The world with its grass, dawns and colors is beautiful, and it was corrupted by the power of money, the power of one man over another. This world under the power of money was fantastic and false. Now, for the first time in the history of culture, it has become real and just.

Olesha also had personal reasons for his faith in an alliance between the artist and history, even in 1934, that were not atypical for writers of his generation. Born in 1899, he matured just at the time of World War One and the Revolution. His literary beginnings can be dated to 1918 when, with other writers such as Eduard Bagritsky, Valentin Kataev, Zinaida Shishova, and Semen Kirsanov, he established a group in Odessa called the Green Lamp. The group was originally interested in purely aesthetic problems and paid no attention to the events of the Revolution. But soon after moving to Moscow, Olesha found himself in the new company of Ilya Ilf, Evgeny Petrov, Mikhail Bulgakov, and others. He began to write agitational poems for the proletarian newspaper, *Gudok* (*The Whistle*). In his new role, he almost immediately became a star, and his fame spread beyond the enthusiasm of his fellow writers to the masses. Barely twenty years old, he was known and admired as "Zubilo." The critic Elizabeth Beaujour observed of this time in Olesha's life:

> The "Gudok" period held the same privileged position in Olesha's memory as battlefield fellowship often does for others. Olesha rode the open platforms of trains in snow storms and recalled feeling warm inside because engineers and bearded men in sheepskins called him "friend." Banal as it may sound, it was extremely important to Olesha, especially in retrospect. For a brief time he was successfully integrated into a revolutionary collective which embraced but did not stifle him. "Zubilo" and Olesha the artist were complementary and interdependent, not mutually exclusive. It would seem that Olesha had no need then to use his writings as a weapon to assert his individual existence. For a moment, he realized his ambition to be one with the Revolution and the workers: "Everything was one there, my youth, and the youth of my Soviet Homeland, and the youth of our press, our journalism" – Olesha wrote later.

A writer who has experienced something close to the fulfillment of the crucial dream of the Russian intelligentsia, to be with the people in their march for progress, does not easily denounce his intimate relationship with history. Soon, however, a growing split between comrade Zubilo, freshly married to history, and Yuri Olesha the artist (a lover of

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nature) interrupted the idyll.

Olesha illustrates the dilemma in his later story, "The Cherry Stone." Here, as in his story "Love," the hero Fedya experiences illuminations as a result of having fallen in love and, having begun to notice the world in metaphors, he becomes an artist, that is, one who sees nature better than others. Once, while waiting for his beautiful girlfriend Natasha at a trolley stop, Fedya is constantly asked for directions by other people. Being a nice fellow, he does not mind telling one person, then another, how to get to the railway station, the museum, and so on. His girlfriend does not appear; he continues to give directions. Slowly, and against his will, the artist feels himself being transformed:

> And behold? A whistle hangs between my lips! I am whistling! I have a right to whistle! Children, don't you envy me? Stand back! Oho! Behold . . . I stand there with one leg forward, my hands behind my back, propping my ribs with a crimson baton. Congratulate me, Natasha. I have become a policeman.

This fantastic metamorphosis, however, is only a dream, anxious and perhaps a bit frightening, but still a dream. Fedya, having woken up, retreats to a quiet Voltairean garden and silently plants a little cherry tree – the tree of his personal hopes and artistic treasures. A surprise meets him here too. A new construction project is planned for just the place where Fedya has planted his little tree. Yet there is still hope; by accident, the very spot where his tree is planted will not be covered by new buildings and, almost by miraculous coincidence, a garden will be planted there. "The Cherry Stone" was written several years before the First Congress of Soviet Writers, and with this in mind, it is hard to reject the notion that Olesha, who hoped he would be accepted as a writer, in fact counted on a lucky coincidence.

Olesha's most famous work, the short novel "Envy," is devoted to his efforts to find a place as an artist in the new world, to consummate his stormy affair with history. The new world in the novel is personified by two characters who are men of action, Babichev, a successful manager in the new Soviet meat industry, and Makarov, a young sportsman who dreams of becoming a machine. The artist character in the novel is personified by Kavalerov, who at the same time scorns the new primitive, materialistic men and envies them. He does not doubt for a moment that history (meaning the future, portrayed in the novel as the beautiful sixteen-year old girl Valya) will belong to Makarov and not to him. Makarov the young barbarian has no romantic illusions about history; he simply knows her from his Marxist textbook, which teaches the dialec-

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tical view of reality. Makarov reasons:

> There was a revolution, wasn't there? A terrible revolution. Why was it so terrible? Wasn't it also extremely generous? In terms of the clock face as a whole it was something fundamentally good. Very well. You have to think about these things in terms of the clock face as a whole, not simply in terms of one or two of the divisions of the surface of the face. It follows therefore that there is no difference between the generosity and cruelty. There is only one thing – time. That's the iron law, the ineluctable logic of history. History and time are one and the same thing. They are just like Siamese twins. . . . The most important thing in the world is undoubtedly and indisputably an understanding of the nature of time.

The artist, Kavalerov, envies the primitive Makarov (as artists have often envied primitives) mostly because Kavalerov cannot fight the power of his "meek feelings" (a key term in Olesha's vocabulary), so that he could join the victors. He somehow cannot visualize himself as being happily in the "iron laws" of history, in spite of the fact that he acknowledges them and even sincerely desires to submit to them. The prize is the young beautiful Valya, and knowing that Valya will not be his but Volodya's, he falls prey to envy. History, like nature, proves to be a goddess with a heart of stone. Kavalerov shows promise as the hero of a new Notes from the Underground. He prepares to feed himself for the rest of his life with hatred and resentment for his more successful and less sensitive comrades.

The new world was prepared to rescue artists from this dilemma, and many writers appeared to be grateful for salvation. They had to put an end to their tendency toward contemplativeness, their tendency to treat incidental experiences too seriously. Instead, they were advised to put more trust into practical reason, which after all tells us about the difference between what is worth noticing and what is unimportant and illusory. For those writers who required it, the comrades prepared theoretical guides. It seemed an easy thing to do, when one had the great Russian realistic tradition behind oneself and a new philosophy with a teleological order before one. Once again, as in Turgenev's times, writers knew where from, where to, and what for the hunter's carriage goes. And if something came from "under the earth" during a lightning bolt, it was only a metaphor and not reality. For the truth had been revealed, and artists were to feel liberated from the torments of its pursuit.

Olesha himself finally came to an understanding of this. In 1936, during a campaign of slander against Shostakovich, Olesha felt it necessary to explain his views. It also gave him an opportunity to speak about his

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own artistic philosophy. At a writers' meeting in Moscow, he said:

> When I like one or another artist, I tend to exaggerate his merits and to forgive him everything, as if believing that he cannot be wrong. That is exactly how I felt about Shostakovich. And, suddenly, I read in *Pravda* that Shostakovich's opera is "muddle instead of music." This was said by *Pravda*, that is, the voice of the Communist Party. What should I do with my attitude towards Shostakovich? If I was delighted with Shostakovich, and *Pravda* said that his opera was muddle, then either I am wrong or *Pravda* is. The easiest thing of all would be to say to myself, "I am not wrong," and to reject for myself, internally, the opinion of *Pravda*. In other words, being left with the conviction that, in the given case, the Party is saying untrue things, I would allow the possibility that the Party is wrong. What does all of this lead to? Very serious psychological consequences.

These "psychological consequences" had already been suggested in Olesha's character Kavalerov. In his desire for truth, Olesha now condemns the epistemological subjectivity of his original avant-guard poetics. His choice of artistic forms is an integral part of his ideological assumptions. "Formalism," he said at the same meeting, "is born out of emptiness. True art emerges when an idea, powerful but naked, requires clothes. When the idea is well thought out, the words come running on their own, like children."

The truth is expressed in the "party line."

> If I disagree with the Party in anything, the whole picture should grow dim in my eyes because all the elements and all the details of this picture are connected; they spring up from one another, and not one of them can be faulty.

Yet Olesha, in spite of his discovery of the truth in Pravda, did not denounce his metaphors. "It is a typical feature of the intelligentsia," the Soviet proletarian critic Elsberg observed in the 1930s, "to see one's own error but not to be able to correct it." Elsberg was right. Olesha belonged to the rare category of writers who cannot write dishonestly. Having chosen what he considered truth, however, he could not find the new beauty that was supposed to accompany it. The later decline of Olesha's literary capabilities seems to have been strongly influenced by his ideological choices. For Olesha, the relationship between his artistic goals and the options offered him by the world in which he functioned was a contradictory and even tragic one. For Karamzin, truth and beauty were

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inseparable: the contemplation of beauty by the artist was an intuitive contact with truth. For Olesha, the artist must choose between truth and beauty. And this choice led him to his artistic self-destruction.

History was not particularly cruel to Olesha. Of course, he did not play any important part in the official literature of his country, which up to the 1950s kept the ladder of success inaccessible to him. What was left him was the role of a spectator who had played on the stage a long time ago and who was remembered by few. Olesha later wrote quite a few self-centered literary pieces in which he referred to the works of his youth. After West Belorussia was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939, Olesha had an opportunity to visit his parents in the town of Grodno. He decided not to go: he had always wanted people in Grodno to notice him on the street and to say, "This is the son of the Oleshas, a famous writer." It seemed to him that the time had not come yet. This feeling probably never abandoned him.

Coming in

Partisan Review:

- Robert Wistrich: *Jewish Intellectuals in Vienna*
- Elizabeth Dalton on Henry James
- Anatole Broyard: *A Memoir*
- Irving Louis Horowitz on Morris R. Cohen
- Peter Shaw on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- Alexandre Etkind: *Trotsky and Psychoanalysis*
- Dorothea Straus on Jerzy Kosinski
- J. Anthony Lukas: *Integration in Boston*
- Education Beyond Politics: A Symposium

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DAVID SIDORSKY

On Isaiah Berlin

There is an old dogma which can be traced back before Aristotle's argument with the Platonists to the conflict between followers of Parmenides and of Heracleitus that all philosophers can be divided into two camps: monists who are the champions of the One and pluralists who are the champions of the Many. This doctrine rises to the stature of an aphorism only with its topping and undercutting conclusion that all historians of philosophy can be divided into two groups: those who believe that all philosophers are either monists or pluralists, and those who do not. The recurrent theme of Isaiah Berlin's new collection of essays, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, sketching the career of ideas that have shaped modern politics, particularly some of its most destructive and catastrophic tendencies, is that monism, particularly in its utopian varieties has been the central, harmful illusion of the twentieth century.* (Berlin writes of our century in an essay on European unity, "It is by now a melancholy commonplace that no century has seen such remorseless and continued slaughter of human beings by one another as our own.") The recognition of pluralism, traced to the thought of romanticism and of the counter-Enlightenment, appropriately mixed with an openness to reality derived from empiricism and a moderating of ambition generated by skepticism, provides the intellectual antidote.

The most attractive formulation of the argument is in the opening autobiographical essay, "The Pursuit of the Ideal." In it, Berlin examines what might be termed, to adapt Keynes's title for his account of Cambridge, "Oxford's early beliefs," the ideal of historical progress which he shared. It was a viewpoint derived from the historicism of Marx and Hegel that was built upon the Enlightenment faith in the application of the methods of the natural sciences to social problems. This faith is seen as a continuation of the philosophical rationalistic tradition, exemplified by the confidence of Socrates in the power of argument. In Berlin's special case it also represented the moral to be drawn from the great Russian writers that there was a way to transform the human condition through the properly educated heart, even when a proper education may require in a Rousseauist Tolstoy or a Slavophile Dostoevsky some unlearning of the false sophistication of the West.

Alongside the autobiographical memoir Berlin provides an analytical formulation of this belief in "the Platonic ideal" that "all genuine ques-

**The Crooked Timber of Humanity. Chapters in the History of Ideas.* By Isaiah Berlin. Alfred A. Knopf. $21.50.

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tions" have one true answer, that there must be a "dependable path toward" those true answers, and there can be no incompatability among them. The force of this formulation, it seems to me, sets up an effective and ironic contrast between the severity of the expectation for truth in moral and political thought with the proliferation of the concepts of undecidable propositions, incompleteness theorems in mathematics, and of indeterminacy and statistical probability in physics.

Although Berlin often presents the philosophical issue in direct and incisive manner, throughout this volume he does not, as a rule, join the issue in philosophical terms but focuses upon the intellectual history of the relevant concepts. So the confrontation with this Platonic *cum* enlightenment monism comes through his reading and interpretation of Machiavelli. This is not the Machiavelli who analyzed the strategies of political realism but the Machiavelli who affirmed the tragic dilemma which Berlin had earlier explored in his celebrated essay, "The Originality of Machiavelli." For, in terms of the public domain with its values of international peace, domestic order and civic virtue, the ideal society can be identified with the more stable periods of the Roman empire. In terms of the realization of human spirituality, individual piety or the expression of moral good will, an alternative historical period, perhaps within medieval Christianity, would provide the ideal society. The differences between these two ideals cannot be synthesized or adjudicated and there is no neutral point of view from which they can be ranked and evaluated. Each of these ideals embodies objective values that develop from different features of an historically changing human nature.

This point is generalized for Berlin in the Vichian representation of history, particularly "cultural history." The values of the society portrayed by Homer and the literary accomplishment of that portrait are not commensurable with the values demonstrated in the writings of Dante or, in turn, with its poetic virtues. Thus, any attempt to compare the two on a single hierarchical scale would be incoherent. The conclusion is that historical societies demonstrate an incompatible plurality of values which are not reducible to a single inclusive ideal.

One philosophical issue which must then be confronted is whether pluralism leads to value relativism, and Berlin's argument is that it does not. Value pluralism involves the recognition that it is difficult for a person of one culture to enter into the frame of reference of any other culture and understand the people and their expression from the agent's point of view. Yet this recognition has led to many strategies to achieve a more authentic and empathetic understanding of the products of another culture, rather than to interpret them as abnormal or variant extensions of the native culture or of a fixed human nature. These efforts, pioneered on Berlin's account by such founding fathers of pluralism as

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Herder and Vico, belie the thesis of the cultural relativist. An understanding of the differences to be found in the "worlds" presented in the writings of Homer, Dante or Sidney Sheldon, and an insight into the disparate styles of these authors, while excluding a single straight-line measure would also demonstrate that the values ascribed to each are held for objective grounds and are not simply in the eyes of the beholder.

One important point of confirmation, which Berlin points to without pressing the argument, is the importance and unavoidability of assertions of a factual character within cultural or religious points of view. As a harbinger of pluralism, Berlin takes note of Montesquieu's support for Montezuma's remark that the Aztec religion might be best for Aztecs and the Christian religion best for Spaniards. Yet if the Aztec religion did assert that human sacrifice is a necessary condition for the sun to keep moving across the sky, that claim is false. The pluralist's recognition that different religions may represent responses to legitimate differences of human beings in different societies need not lead to a relativistic thesis that all practices are equally good and that there can be no basis for cross-cultural criticism or judgment.

From the encounter with pluralism, freed from the illusory specter of relativism, Berlin sketches an important political moral which stands in sharp contrast to the totalitarian implications that had been derived from monism in the past century. It is the lesson of minimalism, of the transcendent value of maintaining a modicum of stability and equilibrium in confronting a potential escalation of conflict and of stressing the minimization of suffering and the inevitability of limits in human historical action when weighing the benefits that can be achieved through resort to force.

Berlin has placed this political approach in the tradition of liberalism alongside John Stuart Mill's development of the concept of liberty which is required for a defense against the oncoming threat of "uniformitarian despotism" and Alexander Herzen's realization of the cruel deception of the sacrifice of life on the altars of historical progress. It is interesting to note its degree of convergence with the other traditions shaped by the realities of the failure of the promises of National Socialism and of internationalist Marxism. Karl Popper in his early post-war and post-positivistic writings argued the theoretical indeterminateness and unpredictability of history and the practical turn to piecemeal social reform against large-scale "social engineering." Even more closely, Michael Oakeshott has identified the sources of political morality within the conservation of pluralistic institutional traditions, a morality which is saved from relativism by the possibility of criticism and convergence via the "intimations of that tradition." (One particularly noteworthy parallel is Oakeshott's exegesis of the Tower of Babylon story as demonstrating

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that Utopian ideals cannot be constructed in the historical world because of the diversity of human languages with their incommensurate conceptual frames.) Berlin's focus in this volume is not upon the comparative adequacy of the liberal tradition but upon the significance for contemporary history of the recurrent debate, in diverse ways, between monism and pluralism in modern political thought.

Thus in the essay, "The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West," that debate which had been dramatically developed in his intellectual autobiography emerges with significant variations. For Berlin shows how the Platonic monistic ideal became embodied in the ideas of a universal natural law, related in Europe, to the status of a universal Roman law and a single Roman Catholic faith. The pluralist challenge to this universalism was ever present in the irrepressible local traditions. These traditions influenced the Protestant Reformation and found expression in it. The Protestant location of religious salvation in individual faith rather than in a universal code of practice was a catalyst for the emergence of the pluralist idea. Yet Berlin, as a chronicler of the paradoxes of cultural history, proceeds to demonstrate that the forces that gave birth to the Protestant Reformation also gave rise to modern physics with its powerful reinforcement of the idea of universal truths that are discoverable and verifiable by men and women of all cultures, historical periods or social inheritance. With the extension by the Enlightenment of this vision of scientific truth from modern physics to the domain of economic and political events, the basis had been laid for modern utopianism, particularly as expressesd in many Marxist, socialist, and anarchist political movements.

The decisive counter for pluralism was developed in the thought of critics of the Enlightenment, especially among the Romantics like Herder. Political or moral ideals for the Romantics were not universal Platonic archetypes found by rational inquiry but creations of the Self, whether an individual or a collective self. In another work, Berlin had cited Herder's outcry against the classical ideal in Germany that "we are not Greeks, we are not Romans," and it is a corollary of the quest for self-expression that the ideal society for a German must be different than it would be for a Frenchman of the Enlightenment. Although Berlin comments and clarifies the dark role that this romantic idea of self expression has played in the will to power of modern nationalism, he demonstrates its potential for pluralism in its rejection of any universal and uniform social model that is to be imposed upon another person. Since every moral ideal is the creation of one group ego or cultural self, there cannot be any Platonic republic, utopian ideal or perfect society produced for another society. The political corollary of this principle of the necessary imperfection of fixed ideals is that each society must be left

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to do its own thing, rather than to be guided into conformity with the laws which best suit universal human nature.

This principle can be clearly differentiated from the realistic or pragmatic argument that a perfect society can be projected as a theoretically coherent idea but is unattainable in practice. For the notion of a single perfect society is conceptually incoherent if it must include an incompatible set of expressive values. This distinction can be seen in the parallel criticism of anarchistic utopianism. Again, the argument is not that a society in which the use of force or the threat of force would be replaced by the persuasive power of love and reason is an ideal possibility which cannot be realized. Since every society necessarily requires that its members will be bound by some set of rules, norms or laws, and the idea of a rule or law presupposes a sanction for its violation, the assumption that there could be an anarchic society in which sanctions would be inadmissable is conceptually contradictory. On this analysis, it would follow that one reason for the escalation of coercion by utopians lies in the fact that while seeming to goad persons along the path to a harmonious even if asymptotic ideal, they are asserting moral authority in the name of a self-contradictory idea. It is this theorem of the impossibility of a perfect society which is the logical analogue for Berlin of the expressive Kantian aphorism that from the crooked timber of humanity, nothing straight can be made. It reinforces the political moral of the limited scope that should be given to politics in social transformation.

Berlin ascribes to the romantic thought of the nineteenth century a critical place in refuting the idea of a single universal society that can progress toward perfection, primarily because of its view that ideals are the creation, rather than the discovery, of plural groups. Yet even while delineating this he indicates his refusal to "condone the extravagances of romantic irrationalism." For the romantic view that ideals are the creation of the self also meant that these ideals were not checked by such Enlightenment icons as "Reason" and "Nature." An ideal could be pursued even though it violated the moral criterion, singularly stressed by Kant but implicit to some degree in any moral behavior, of not asserting moral imperatives which were in conflict with those of other communities of rational beings. Similarly, contrary to naturalism, a political course could be followed even though the evidence available by inquiry into the relevant facts of the situation weighed in for its abandonment. Berlin tellingly quotes Fichte: "I do not accept what nature offers because I must . . . I believe it because I will."

Such an attitude, as the French existentialists showed in the Second World War, can inspire resistance in the face of incredible odds, for in being prepared to defy both logic and fact, it can be defiant of alien power. Yet, it has also blazed a trail which Berlin partly tracks in his es-

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say "On the Apotheosis of the Romantic Will" to "romantic self-assertion, nationalism, the worship of heroes and leaders, and in the end to Fascism and brutal irrationalism and the oppression of minorities."

In the longest single essay in this volume, Berlin does not focus on the roots of Fascism within romanticism or nationalism, however, but on its sources in the thought of Joseph de Maistre. In one sense this is not surprising, since Maistre's writings provide a paradigm for monism, and he was the model for Berlin's earlier portrait of the hedgehog who "knows one big thing," in contrast to the pluralist fox. On the other hand it is puzzling (a mark of the originality of Berlin's interpretation), since Maistre is familiarly classified as a champion of the restoration of throne and altar after the French Revolution, while Fascism is not identified with the cause of an hereditary monarch or with support of the Catholic Church.

The resolution of this puzzle depends in part upon the meaning ascribed to Fascism, especially whether it involved an essential reference to a reorganization of the economy. In the propaganda of Fascist and Nazi movements – the programs of the corporate state in Italy or Spain with its governmental control of industry and labor, or, for the nationalization and socialization of business and finance in Germany, the promise expressed in its name, National Socialist Workers party – the economic factor seemed to be central to the definition. In the historical memory of Fascism, this appears as a secondary aspect of the development of totalitarian states in continuous pursuit of military expansion.

Apart from the economic issue, Berlin's thesis requires the distinction between the conservative critics of the French Revolution like Burke and the proto-Fascism of Maistre. Both share an opposition to any effort to impose the "abstract" revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity against the historical and institutional wisdom concretized in the traditional order, hierarchy and patriarchy. Despite Maistre's claims for restoration of the traditional institutions, however, Berlin sustains the distinction by sketching the totality of Maistre's ideological counter-revolutionary passion, which would subvert any effort to conserve a balance between liberty and order or equality and hierarchy. Most significantly, the conservative recognition of the inevitability of force in political arrangements emerges in Maistre as the celebration of the ubiquitousness and the utility of terror.

(Perhaps, particularly from the American perspective, there is some significance in Burke or Toqueville's supporting American independence or the American revolution, and at the same time condemning the French, while Maistre could see in both the bitter fruit of rational ideas applied to politics. Thus, Maistre suggests that since the city of Washington is the projected product of rational planning, rather than of

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historical growth, he is prepared to wager "a thousand to one" that it will never be built.)

Berlin refers to this prediction as comically false, and it contrasts with his insight about future Russian developments when he wrote that "If the Russians . . . play with this serpent (of modern doctrines) no people will be more cruelly bitten." These predictions provide a foil to his comprehensive view of Maistre as the "terrifying prophet" who, while arguing for restoration of an irretrievable past, projected a vision of the new order. That "order which Maistre had outlined as the only remedy against the dissolution of the social fabric came into being," Berlin writes "in our own time, in its most hideous form." Thus, Berlin concludes that the "totalitarian society, which Maistre, in the guise of historical analysis, visualized, became actual." Its actualization has shown the power of Maistre's insight, not as a conservative thinker but as the prophet of the Fascist reality "of our day."

In the course of developing this intellectual portrait, Berlin reviews and analyzes many of Maistre's criticisms of the Enlightenment and the Revolution. Among these is his original critique of the theory of language as a constructed artifact advanced by reductionist philosophers and his biting analysis of Rousseau's praise of the primitive. There is a degree of ambivalence about his temperament which appears to combine an objective quality of realism with an extremist tendency to fanaticism. Berlin cites a letter of Maistre's ally, Lammenais: "He was endowed with a generous and noble soul, and his books are all as if written on the scaffold."

This recognition of the difference between Maistre's temperament and his beliefs points to another factor in assessing the role that ideas and beliefs play in political activity. There is a direct line, for example, that can be traced in the career of Charles Maurras between his actions for the restoration of throne and altar and his subsequent support for the government of Petain. T. S. Eliot shared the convictions of Maurras on both the monarchy and the church, and Eliot's teacher at Harvard, Irving Babbitt, was as ardent a critic of the French revolutionary heritage during the same period. Yet it is impossible to envisage Eliot or Babbitt being involved in Maurras's activities like having his bodyguard of Camelots du Roi violently break up a lecture on Racine and chase the speaker from the hall.

The general point is the distance between the intellectual constructions of nineteenth century thought that he surveys and the political movements of the twentieth century which were built on these foundations. For in the political actions of Lenin, Stalin, or Hitler the history that seems to emerge is not so much one of persons guided by utopian ideas toward terrible deeds as it seems to be one in which they manipu-

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lated these ideas as instruments to express their need to coerce and oppress others, or their desire to expand power.

The parallel point is that monistic ideals, when advanced by persons of skeptical or ironic temperament bear within them safeguards on the use of force in their realization. Plato, whose idea of the perfect state is the primary source of monism, also provides us with the cautionary ironic drama in which the republic ruled by the philosopher king devolves into an absolutist tyranny. A source of Kant's metaphor in Isaiah XL, 4 that "the crooked shall be made straight," is usually read as a form of eschatological utopian prophecy, appropriate to the Kantian denial. Yet the religious skeptics also muted the utopian prospect by interpreting the equivocal text as a much more limited messianism, reading the phrase in its literal sense to mean that the rugged terrain of the abandoned land can be made level again, with the restoration of political sovereignty. Religious ironists through the ages, from Chaucer to Kafka and Agnon (in his novella *That Which is Crooked Shall be Made Straight)* have shown how the prophetic reading can be sustained while the tangled skein of things remains irremediable in this life.

In this volume, however, Berlin has respected the constraints of the history of ideas, and he avoids detailed comments on the connections between these ideas and their exploitation in institutional history by persons of extraordinary temperament, even when he has himself been a participant or witness of that history. The sense of great excitement generated by his works, then, is not derived from the impress of its relevance to contemporary history, although that is implicit throughout these essays. Rather, it has its source in the fusion of the prose style with the intellectual substance, the power and rhythm of the movement of the sentences as they lead to the shape and clarity of the intellectual portrait. This achievement is an intrinsic confirmation of Berlin's central theme of objective pluralism. For the romantic critic could correctly point out that the style reflects the unique qualities of the individual, without contradicting the classical thesis that its objectification can provide all men with an ideal form to be pursued.

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BOOKS

Is the Revolution a Text?

THE CULTURAL ORIGINS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION. By Roger Chartier. Duke University Press. $29.95.
INVENTING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: ESSAYS ON FRENCH POLITICAL CULTURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. By Keith Michael Baker. Cambridge University Press. $49.50.

Historians are the hermit crabs of the academy. Their work lacks the thick shell of theory that now separates scholar from layman in the rest of the humanities, yet they hesitate to renounce a theoretical approach altogether. Thus they borrow, crib, and steal from other disciplines. They appear in the guise of amateur psychologists one day and amateur economists the next. At its best, this eclecticism helps cast old subjects in new and exciting lights; at its depressing worst, it does little more than dress them up in new and pretentious jargon.

At present, American history departments are resounding with the clatter of used theories falling to the ground and hermit historians struggling to squeeze into new ones. Only a decade ago, with the so-called "new social history" still dominant, members of the profession looked for inspiration mostly among the "hard" social sciences. Armed with quantitative methods and sociological models, they plunged into the archives as earnest census-takers of the past. To the dismay of traditionalists (some of whom detected a left-wing agenda in the prevalent motto, "History from the bottom up"), they filled their data bases with statistics on grain yields and infant mortality, often disregarding the intellectual and political currents that also shaped past societies. In fact, political history never fared as badly as the more acerbic critics charged, but it did not remain immune to the new trends. Studies of revolution, for instance, tended to begin with learned discussions of "status crystallization," the "etiology of internal war," and other concepts borrowed from the sociologists and political scientists.

Today, however, historians are less concerned with the bare facts of social existence and more with the customs, gestures, and rituals that give those facts meaning. They now plunge into their work as earnest anthropologists of the past, and since their sources are not live subjects but texts, they borrow their theories and methods as much from literary criticism as from anthropology. This shift has brought new attention to

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high politics, but the traditionalists will hardly rejoice, for if Marx has vanished from the footnotes along with Weber and Parsons, they have been replaced by Foucault, Derrida, and all the usual suspects from the French generation of 1968. Studies of revolution have not reverted to traditional considerations of great men and ideas. Now they tend to focus on themes like "the poetics of power" and "the representation of authority."

It is easy to mock and bemoan these developments. The "new cultural history" (the title of an influential recent collection edited by Lynn Hunt) has inherited much of the fearful opacity of contemporary literary criticism. Worse, just as Jacques Derrida can spend an entire lecture discussing the title of the lecture, the new cultural historians frequently devote half a book to questioning the parameters of the subject treated in the other half, whether or not these qualms are appropriate. The new movement also lends itself all too easily to a "politically correct" agenda, notably the Foucauldian desire to expose everything from clothing and eating habits to parades and advertisements as part of a fearsome "apparatus" of gender, class, and racial oppression.

Yet this is not the whole story. While the "new social history" had many strengths, its practitioners never wholly broke away from Fernand Braudel's unfortunate dismissal of political and intellectual ferment as mere "foam" drifting above more significant layers of social and geographical reality. The limits of this approach became painfully clear when applied to explosive political events such as the French Revolution, where the "foam" proved corrosive indeed to the underlying strata. By treating political language with the consideration it deserves, the new cultural history has had a liberating effect on many historical fields, not least on the study of the French Revolution itself.

Despite the publishing orgy of the recent bicentennial, which left at least two thousand books washed up on library shelves, the study of the Revolution has long been in need of such new approaches. Until a generation ago, most historians clung to the petrified view that 1789 had its origins in class conflict between a declining aristocracy and a rising bourgeoisie. Since then, a revisionist school has demolished the empirical basis for this interpretation with great effectiveness but failed to produce a convincing substitute. Nor did the new social history prove useful in this regard. It was the self-proclaimed "philosophical historian" François Furet who began the process of reconstruction by showing, convincingly, that the true "rupture" in 1789 occurred not in France's social structure, but in the realm of ideas, as a new, democratic political culture was erected over the scattered debris of divine-right monarchy. Furet, however, did not himself speculate as to the origins of this new political culture. Now, a number of historians – mostly associated with "the new

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cultural history" – have begun to do so in ways that make the Revolution seem exciting *terra incognita* once again. Two new books by Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, and Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, represent, in very different ways, the best of this new approach. They also reveal some of its flaws.

Neither of these books are entirely new, and neither fits easily into established publishing categories. Baker has revised and sewn together a number of compact, difficult, brilliant essays, composed over nearly two decades, on the political language of eighteenth-century France (in some cases, the seams still show awkwardly between the chapters). Chartier, meanwhile, has produced a concise, subtle and original overview of recent work in eighteenth-century cultural history. His genre, which may seem unfamiliar to American readers, is the *cours d'agrégation*, the marathon seminar in which gifted alumni of the *écoles normales* (like Chartier himself) synthesize masses of secondary research for aspiring members of the French educational elite. Unlike Baker, who has long evinced an obsession with the Revolution, Chartier, a cultural historian best known to American readers for his contribution to the *History of Private Life* series, is relatively new to the subject.

Despite these differences, both books have the same goal: explaining how a socially hidebound, rigidly hierarchical nation came to desire liberty, social equality, and all the rest of the unlikely harvest of 1789 in the first place, and to wrest these things from the monarchy by force. The question has a long history, but Baker and Chartier give it a new twist by assigning overwhelming weight to what they call the realm of "discourse." This is to say that socio-economic issues have faded into the deep background (in Baker's case, so far as to become essentially invisible), without heralding the return of older approaches that attributed the Revolution to a handful of great thinkers. Rather, following much current literary theory, both authors locate the *philosophes* within a great linguistic web that ensnares all individual thinkers, no matter how brilliant or original. The decisive prerevolutionary shifts occurred within this web, in obedience to cultural and linguistic imperatives, as some words acquired new meanings, others lost their sacred connotations, and still others ("nation," "liberty," "public opinion") gained a new kind of power.

Of the two, Chartier takes a much broader view of language and culture. In fact, he criticizes earlier works (notably Daniel Mornet's pioneering 1933 study, *The Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution*, whose title he deliberately echoes) for limiting their investigations to overtly political and religious writings. Why, Chartier asks, attribute phenomena such as the decline of religious observance solely to the diffusion of deist

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or atheist tracts? Why not consider popular discontent with a severe and unforgiving Counter-Reformation priesthood that waged war against local superstitions? Why not examine the effects of the deep doctrinal splits within the eighteenth-century French Church? No matter how "revolutionary" some pre-1789 works may appear, they did not necessarily have much contemporary impact (Rousseau's *Social Contract*, a notorious example, had few readers before the late 1780s.) Even if these works did have an impact, what made readers receptive to their message in the first place? "Do Books Make Revolutions?" Chartier asks in one of his chapter titles, and he tentatively answers no, at least not by themselves. Historians must rummage through the archives not only for the overt warning signs of revolution but also for shifts in underlying, elusive "cultural practices."

In his essay, Chartier scrupulously obeys this injunction. While not entirely ignoring the writings of the *philosophes*, he also discusses law, painting, religious rituals, royal iconography, and much else. It makes for a rich, at times enthralling panoply. He speculates on the increasing egalitarianism of literary salons where participants, so to speak, left their social rank at the door, and also on the explosion of sensational printed legal briefs in which lawyers attempted to try cases before "the tribunal of public opinion," implicitly challenging the royal monopoly on justice. A particularly striking example comes in his interpretation of reading habits. In the eighteenth century, he suggests, as the number of printed works expanded and became available in smaller, cheaper editions, a fundamental shift in attitudes toward the printed word occurred. In place of the reverence accorded to rare, elegant editions of the Bible and the classics came a more casual, and ultimately, a more critical stance toward reading material, including politically orthodox reading material. This shift contributed to the "desacralization" of Church and monarchy alike.

Unfortunately, Chartier does not do a particularly good job of weaving these different subjects together, thanks to his excessive – indeed exasperating – modesty. As a work of synthesis, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* necessarily mines most of its information and many of its insights from other scholars (in large part Americans – a fact that has doubtless sent some deceased French historians spinning in Père Lachaise.) Chartier not only gives these scholars full credit, but he also summarizes their arguments at length, and he judiciously weighs their criticisms of each other. All of this will delight graduate students, but it makes slow going for everyone else. Chartier also understates his own goals in the book. He presents it as little more than a postscript to Mornet and devotes many overly opaque passages (inspired mostly by Foucault) to the nature of causality and the question of whether revolu-

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tions even have "cultural origins." He ends with the flat conclusion that the Enlightenment and the Revolution were both "inscribed together in a long-term process." Instead of finding the overall argument boldly stated, the reader must hunt for it.

And yet the argument is both subtle and appealing. Chartier explains that the old regimes of Louis XIV, XV, and XVI emerged out of a period of nasty civil and religious strife, after which the population willingly conceded new powers to the political and spiritual authorities in return for security and order. By the eighteenth century, however, the memory of strife had faded, while the new powers remained, chafing and slowly alienating the French from traditional institutions. At the same time (and here Chartier draws heavily on the early work of Jürgen Habermas), two important cultural shifts took place. First, the French had traditionally conceived of French society as a single "great chain" of corporate bodies under a divinely-ordained monarch, but now more and more authors began to distinguish between the public domain of the state and the realm of private individuals, with its domestic virtues of sobriety, modesty, and fidelity.

Second, an expansion of literacy, coupled with an increase in the circulation of books and periodicals, created a new arena for critical public discussion, detached from traditional institutions, in which all beliefs, sacred and profane alike, came in for cool skeptical dissection. In this arena, it was precisely the new "private" domestic values that reigned supreme, and in their light, the dissolute, ostentatious and corrupt royal court appeared ugly and diseased. The splendor of the monarchy now counted for less than the personal conduct of the monarch (and, in Marie Antoinette's case, the monarch's wife). In fact, the language of private virtue, articulated in the burgeoning press, as well as in the world of salons and reading circles, gave powerful expression to the long-simmering disaffection with the monarchy and Church and produced, by 1789, a lengthy and severe indictment of what would soon be called the "old regime." Revolution had become, if not inevitable, then at least "politically conceivable." As Dryden wrote, in lines that would make a nice epigraph for Chartier (although their seventeenth-century origins somewhat undermine his point about the novelty of the phenomenon), "What weight of ancient witness can prevail/ If private reason hold the public scale?"

Chartier's close attention to the nuances of language and custom produces a subtle account of the Revolution, perhaps the most compelling account currently available. Yet is also evokes a nagging chorus of doubts. First of all, his interpretation, attractive as it is, rests on thin evidence. Unlike an anthropologist, Chartier cannot observe his subjects' "cultural practices" *in situ*. He must tease them out of texts devoted to

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different subjects. To discover "cultural shifts" in this manner, and then speculate on their political ramifications, is a tenuous process indeed. The book also leaves a host of questions dangling in the air. Why did these cultural shifts occur in the first place? Does some phantom of the rising bourgeoisie lurk in the deep recesses of the analysis, or did the cultural shifts themselves give rise to the bourgeoisie? How do these shifts relate to the well-known story of overseas defeat, royal bankruptcy, rising social tensions, and all the other traditional "causes" of the French Revolution? Most worrisome, Chartier seems hardly to acknowledge the common range of human motivations. The desire for power, for wealth, for freedom, for revenge – urges that make up the stuff and drama of conventional history, including the Marxist variety – have little place in this cool and ethereal account of shifting conceptions of "public" and "private." Not surprisingly, Chartier spends hardly any time discussing individuals. Perhaps, like Hayden White (a harsh critic of conventional historiography and a guru of the new cultural history), he has renounced the very idea of reconstructing human beings from fragments of texts and prefers to consider only the perpetual play of discourse.

With Keith Michael Baker's book, this same problem arises even more starkly. At first glance, Baker's work seems conventional compared to Chartier's. He does not range over cultural practices but concentrates on the writings of the major *philosophes*, plus a rogues' gallery of interesting, eccentric minor authors. He provides cogent, original analyses of familiar themes in French intellectual history, such as the idea of representation, the political uses of history, or the origins of ideology. In other words, not only does he dismiss the notion that ideas reflect a deeper, distinct social reality, he refuses to acknowledge any such reality at all outside the web of "discourse." Understanding the revolution therefore means understanding its "political language," a task best fulfilled by tracing how various old regime "discourses" interacted with each other to "invent" new meanings and new symbolic practices (hence his title, *Inventing the French Revolution*).

How does one actually go about tracing these elusive interacting discourses? The older essays in the book mostly scrutinize the collapse of what Baker terms the French monarchy's "linguistic authority." According to traditional Catholic theorists of absolute monarchy, politics, properly speaking, did not exist. The king himself made all decisions and resolved all competing claims. Individuals might give him counsel, but they could never defy him. In the 1750s, however, France's ancient, independent high courts *did* defy Louis XV, repeatedly, when he tried to stamp out the dissident current of Catholic thought called Jansenism. The courts derived much of their strength from their self-proclaimed

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popularity, and a number of counselors suggested that the King had no choice but to begin his own propaganda campaign to compete for this public support. When the crown accepted this advice, Baker suggests, it began digging its own grave, for by acknowledging, even implicitly, the authority of "public opinion," it undermined its claim to embody all politics within itself. Linguistic authority passed, he writes felicitously, from "the public person of the sovereign to the sovereign person of the public."

How did France slide from this fateful symbolic moment to actual revolution? Baker suggests that the monarchy's linguistic abdication opened up a political vacuum in which different authors could now advance their own plans for reconstructing French society. These authors' writings themselves fall into three "discourses" (the word really does begin to grate after awhile): the judicial, which encapsulated the high courts' claim to represent the nation; the administrative, which spoke for a rational management of social interests by an enlightened despot; and the political, which appealed to an ultimate political will inherent in the nation. All three discourses found adherents within the traditional institutions of government, but also among the *philosophes* (Voltaire in the second camp, Rousseau very much in the third). Over time, the three interacted more and more feverishly, and finally, in the hands of the brilliant revolutionary publicist Sieyès, coalesced into a single, powerful "revolutionary discourse."

Baker's more recent essays explore this coalescence by engaging in what German intellectual historians call *Begriffsgeschichte* – the history of concepts. He takes a politically charged expression such as "representation," "public opinion" or "revolution" itself, and traces its metamorphosis between the early eighteenth century and the era of political modernity that dawned in 1789. "Revolution," for instance, first entered the French political lexicon still stamped with the original etymological meaning of a turning around an axis, and therefore of a reversal of fortunes. It connoted the inevitable, unpredictable and chaotic fluctuations in human affairs, but not (as it does today) a process that stretched out over time, and not an act of conscious political will. In the 1750s, however, the *philosophe* Mably (both a "judicial" figure and a classical republican) began to use the word in a different manner, emphasizing that human actors could turn these moments of disruption to useful ends. Voltaire (from the "administrative" camp) and Condorcet conveyed the idea that revolutions could also amount to "the profound and irreversible transformation of society by enlightenment." The eccentric journalist Linguet (a "political" publicist) added an apocalyptic tone, and in 1789, journalists completed the process by describing revolutions

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as extended processes with their own dynamic and chronology.

In short, by 1789 "revolution" had acquired its modern meaning, and for Baker this semantic shift had seismic consequences. For the first time, political actors could cast themselves as "revolutionaries" (the word itself dates only from 1789), that is to say, as secular crusaders for a complete transformation of the social world, imbued with messianic fervor. The transformed concept of "revolution" thus made it possible for France's political leaders to formulate hitherto unimagined objectives – and thereby to transform the course of history.

Baker's analysis is brilliant but frustrating. The brilliance shows in the learned and subtle way he traces the flow of ideas between very different minds, some great, some less so, some linked to traditional institutions, some rebelling against them (in this respect, he owes much to Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock). Rather than creating artificial distinctions between "traditional" and "modern," "revolutionary"and "conservative" (a vice that even Tocqueville fell prey to), he sketches a convincing, nuanced picture of an entire, rapidly changing political culture. He does so in forbiddingly dense prose, but the writing is not poor; rather it is constructed with geometrical precision, each block laid against the next with no distractions. Yet it is impossible to avoid frustration. Like Chartier, Baker leaves some important questions dangling. Why did the political crisis of the 1750s (which fell into many venerable patterns) have such uniquely fateful consequences? Why did the monarchy behave as it did? Why did the crescendo of ideological ferment seemingly increase in lockstep with such mainstays of the conventional political interpretation of the revolution, such as rising bread prices and the monarchy's financial woes?

Unlike Chartier, Baker also fails to address the crucial problems of diffusion and reception. The thinkers he discusses all occupied the rarified intellectual heights of old regime society; they represented a very small elite indeed. What connections exist between the revolutionary journalist's definition of "revolution" (let alone Condorcet's definition) and that of the *sans-culotte*? Given that in 1789, at least half of the population did not even understand standard French (they spoke a congeries of French dialects, plus Breton, Basque, Flemish, German, and several versions of Gascon-Provençal), the question of translation also rears its head. What is the Breton for "revolution," and did the word undergo its own metamorphosis?

Most troubling, however, is Baker's refusal to disassociate human motivations from the language in which they are expressed. One can imagine, for instance, a straightforward reading of the material that would look (for the essay on the word "revolution") something like this: Mably, Voltaire, Condorcet and the others all advanced new

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meanings for "revolution" in order to pursue particular political strategies. In 1789, journalists and politicians developed these meanings further as part of a broad, radical attack on the old regime. But Baker himself resists this reading. For him, the notion of "revolution" came *before* the radical political claims; indeed, it "constructed" them, for all social interests are discursively "constructed." Yet by taking this stand, Baker makes it difficult to understand what motivated the revolutionaries to act as they did. He comes perilously close to suggesting that the French Revolution had its origins in a kind of rhetorical exercise, in which the rumbling sea of discursivity cast forth a new set of meanings that, through their own perverse logic, unconnected to France's social and economic turmoil, then unleashed political chaos, civil war, the Terror, and ultimately a European conflagration with a death toll surpassed only by the holocausts of the two World Wars.

These are deep waters, and Baker's philosophically sophisticated defense of his methods cannot be easily dismissed. Obviously, political language does not simply "reflect" a deeper social reality. It has an internal logic of its own. which in turn helps shape political events. It is the linguistic changes Baker describes which made 1789 different from the countless jacqueries and aristocratic rebellions which preceded it. But these linguistic changes were not sufficient cause for revolution. Rather, they gave a new and different voice to certain fundamental human urges: the desire to revenge humiliation, to acquire new wealth, to assure one's own safety and that of one's family. To understand 1789, by this light, one must also understand why so many of these urges overflowed and consumed France in the events that began with the fall of the Bastille: in short, social and economic considerations must also be taken into account. The shifting language of politics is a crucial element of the story, but it is not the whole story, and it is not independent from the rest of the story. Like Chartier, Baker gives very little sense that the social and economic side even exists.

What is missing from these two books, then, are the actors themselves, the French men and women who brought the revolution about, shortsighted, selfish, and fearful, yet also hopeful, generous, and courageous, the gallery of eccentric, vivid characters who have inspired historians from Jules Michelet to Robert Darnton. Not every historian has to write character sketches, of course, but in the great works, even in arid economic tomes (the work of the French economic historian Ernest Larousse comes to mind), the phantoms of the dead lurk behind the pages. This sort of history, however, depends on two assumptions. First, there must be a recognizable human subject with basic characteristics and motivations that do not change over time. And second, there must be a belief that historians, by exercising their imaginations, can make contact,

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however imperfectly, with such subjects across the centuries. These are precisely the two assumptions that the critical mentors of the "new cultural history" – Foucault, Derrida, and the rest – so strenuously deny. Baker, at least, tries on this score to establish some distance from the literary critics. He defends the "possibility of human agency" – within the prevailing "language games" – and denies that he treats individuals as "mere discursive functions." Yet much of the book undermines the same assertions. Within the web of discourse, are his subjects the spiders or the flies?

On these philosophical issues, the battle has been joined for some time, and historians remain largely on the sidelines. There are advantages to staying out of the melee: historians, unlike literary critics, still form a community of sorts and can profit from each others' work regardless of philosophical differences. Thus Baker's and Chartier's work becomes common property. Their important insights into the cultural and linguistic transformation of prerevolutionary France carry them far beyond the limits of a particular academic tribe. Yet one listens, beneath the page, for the clamor of voices, the cries of triumph and despair that served as chorus to the events taking place in France two hundred years, ago and hears only eerie silence.

DAVID A. BELL

Italian Fascists and Their Jews

BENEVOLENCE AND BETRAYAL: FIVE ITALIAN JEWISH FAMILIES UNDER FASCISM. By Alexander Stille. Summit Books. $21.50.

Although I lived in Milan during the 1960s and spent 1971 in Turin researching Italian entrepreneurs, it never occurred to me that when meeting someone named Segre, Foa or Ovazza I was talking to a Jew. I assumed that all the people named Levi, or having names of cities such as Mosca, Venezian or Milano had been converted to Catholicism many generations ago, and I never suspected that Ugo Stille, whose column I faithfully had followed in the Corriere della Sera, had come to America via Lisbon with his family in September 1941 – probably on the last trip of the boat I had taken exactly one year before. Thus I picked up

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Alexander Stille's book out of personal curiosity – and then could not put it down. For he has managed to write about the Holocaust in human terms, neither stressing the horror and violence of it to the point of fascination, nor making it a scholarly exercise to prove one political lesson or another. In fact, Ugo Stille's American son has depicted the volatile and versatile character of Italians, not in psychological jargon but by describing their daily lives during the stressful cementing of Mussolini's and Hitler's ambivalent alliance; and by showing as well, albeit indirectly, the typical ambiguities and equivocations in the lives of all assimilated Jews everywhere.

Among the hundreds of testimonies, texts and treatises, Primo Levi and Aharon Appelfeld have come closest to conveying the magnitude of the terror of the concentration and extermination camps. They have done so by indirection, by indicating the many emotional scars the survivors of this indescribable nightmare never get rid of, and why none of them ever fully get over this experience: most of them have been too haunted to want to speak of these years even to their closest relatives, to their spouses, and to their children.

In 1984, Alexander Stille decided to find out what had happened to Italian Jews under fascism which, after all, had been in power for sixteen years before the racial laws were put into effect in 1938. He brilliantly describes how natural it had been for some Jews, such as Ettore Ovazza of Turin, to be ardent fascists and to identify with Mussolini as the personification of Italy – the fatherland for which they had fought during the First World War, often having been decorated as heroes.

Stille's lively account of five families: the fascist Ovazzas, their anti-fascist counterparts the Foas, also of Turin, the Di Verolis of the Roman Ghetto, the deeply religious Pacificis of Genova, and the Schönheits of Ferrara all confirm that it would be erroneous even to speak of a prototypical Jewish – or for that matter Italian – reaction or attitude to the racial laws that were being imported from Germany and instituted as well as subverted in the typically ad hoc and haphazard Italian manner we all have come to cherish when living in or visiting that country.

Nearly all Jewish Italians had relatives who had intermarried with Catholics, had many children and friends, and were as attached to their fatherland as they were to their families (observance of their faith varied from a vague recognition of their Jewishness to strict observance of the Shabbat and other holidays). Thus they all started out by assuming that the Germans' racial laws could not possibly damage them, or even touch them.

Better than the scholarly books on this dire period, Stille demonstrates how plausible it was for Italian Jews (and by extension Austrian and French ones) not to believe the handwriting on the proverbial wall.

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Quoting from diaries and reminiscences we learn that when the sudden and virulent anti-Semitism struck a raw nerve, some of the more conservative Jewish elders would bow to it as they used to in the ghettos, which had been abolished only seventy-five years before, and would attack the Zionists who "believe they have another Fatherland that is not Italy"; that the second set of racial laws, of November 1938, would pull the rug out from under these loyal *discriminati* as well; and that by June 1939 when all Jews were expelled from the party and the army reserve, and had to sell their properties and lose the right to practice their professions, they would be dumbstruck. Still, the gradual tightening of the noose had started much sooner for the antifascists, for Vittorio Foa, who was a member of the Turinese group Giustizia e Libertá, whose notorious leader, Mario Levi, had fled Italy in 1934, and whose members were such writers as Leone and Natalia Ginzburg, Cesare Pavese and Carlo Levi. Yet others, such as Massimo Teglio of Genova, turned from a sort of playboy into an exceedingly clever underground figure – collaborating with an enormous network of priests and nuns who were hiding Jews, and moving them from one place to another, often all around the country. He was close to being captured many times while helping to hide others, but always escaped, often with the assistance of Catholics whose sense of humanity would win out over their fear of retribution for harboring or helping Jews.

I could go on exemplifying how Stille has managed to convey the personal histories of dozens of networks of people, and of individuals, most of whom ultimately perished, but some of whom came back to their homes from the death camps, from exile in remote confines, and from America and Switzerland. Instead, I would suggest reading this book which alone can impart the flavor of life under Italian fascism, along with the myriads of responses of individuals among the majority (99 1/2 percent of Italians are Catholic) population ultimately displayed – and Stille shows how insidiously fear crept up on everyone, as is customary in dictatorships, and how its spread eventually allowed for genocide.

Some of the deportees, such as Gina Schönheit who ordered her son not to be stupid and obey the Germans who were shoving him and his father onto a train other than hers, demonstrated the sort of courage that ultimately saved them. Her sixteen-year-old son, when insisting his father ape German phrases at crucial moments, did the same. But after he came back to Ferrara it took Franco almost forty years to speak of Buchenwald. The psychoanalysts would explain this silence as repression, as wishing to forget in order to go on to other things; sociologists might point to the fact that in the 1980s the search for "roots" became prevalent. But even while remembering was put on hold, it took place.

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When I visited Gino Martinoli (one of Natalia Ginzburg's brothers) in Ivrea in 1971, he invited his nephew Roberto who had a Jewish father and Catholic mother and was five years old in 1943, when a peasant family "adopted" him as one of their own. "Every time I was asked for my name," he recalled, "I would say my name is Roberto XXXX, but my real name is, and before I could say Levi, someone would clap a hand over my mouth." At the time, I did not yet appreciate either the vigilance or the courage it took for thousands of Italians to defy the authorities by hiding Jewish children or adults, the danger they ran of being apprehended because their neighbors were being offered bribes so that Italy too would become judenfrei. Stille has painted a lively portrait of "good" and "bad" Italians, of their dealings with specific Germans, and of their treatment of Italian Jews. And he has given us a moving account of the heroic as well as the petty ways individuals adopted in response to the most shameful events in all of human history.

EDITH KURZWEIL

Abstractions

BARNETT NEWMAN: SELECTED WRITINGS AND INTERVIEWS. Edited by John P. O'Neill. Alfred A. Knopf. $40.00.
JAMES TURRELL: THE ART OF LIGHT AND SPACE. By Craig Adcock. University of California Press. $75.00.

Barnett Newman's art is often assumed even where it goes unmentioned. A somber or brilliant expanse of paint masterminded by this giant of the New York School underlies the technical experiments in ambient light by Californian James Turrell a generation later. Formally, Turrell's identification of art with big blank spaces presupposes Newman's example. Philosophically, Turrell subscribes to the belief held by Newman and other Abstract Expressionists, that aesthetics is essentially not beauty, but sensory perception and awareness, since the source of art lies anterior to beauty in human experience.

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Perception and beyond – this topic underlies these two otherwise different books. *The Selected Writings of Barnett Newman* allow us access to this artist's voice, in pungent words spoken extemporaneously as he strode through a museum, or declaimed more deliberately in manifestoes, appreciations, and tactical complaints directed toward aesthetics, artists and the art world. Arranged thematically, with a contextual introduction by Richard Shiff, this selection provides a charming album of opinion and observation to those already familiar with Newman's art. As a lively firsthand glimpse into the artist's intention, it is decidedly improvisatory compared with the sober, reflective, yet scholastic study that Turrell inspired in Adcock. But both the anthology and the monograph remain dependent on the reader's prior knowledge of the paintings and the installations, respectively.

Newman's mission was to make American art competitive with the European avant-garde, and along with Pollock he accomplished this. Born in 1905 in New York to Russian-Polish parents, and majoring in philosophy at CCNY, he spent a decade salvaging his father's menswear business at the time of the Depression. Newman brought to his study of art a sense of the importance of principled reasons for action. As he learned from exiled Europeans fleeing Europe with the advent of Nazism, it was crucial to understand what one does and how it advances human understanding. It was not enough to adorn canvas with illusionistic wheatfields in celebration of regional "isolationist art," as he put it, or even to stylize such scenes in a semi-abstract manner; such pictorial art was clearly insufficient. Until he had produced a major critical response to abstraction, Newman believed, the artist had not earned the right to consider himself a real painter, let alone to expect a place in future art history. Newman's problem was the following: Given the modern necessity of abstraction, what alternative to Cubism could be posited that respected yet did not illustrate content? His oil sketches in the 1940s show seismic indications of pods, sprung seeds, and other notation for germination learned from Surrealism – elemental forms gradually reduced in number, simplified, and made abstract. The abstract symbolism Newman sought to advance was the feeling of an idea. Arriving at this solution took years.

Given his commitment to the artistic breakthrough, it is not surprising that Newman's *Onement I,* 1948 – a paradoxical content, in which a vertically divided field could raze yet also give birth to space – came only after an ordeal of three years' self-imposed exploratory drawing and eight years after a hiatus in painting until he had found "something to say." (The drive to create significant abstraction belonged to the whole period. After two decades of struggling with Baroque and Expressionist antecedents, Jackson Pollock finally achieved a radical synthesis of all ex-

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pressiveness into rhythm sustained infinitely through dripping and pouring paint in *Number 1*, 1948.)

Meanwhile, throughout his sabbatical from painting, goaded by frustration, Newman wrote several polemical articles. Among these are the more celebrated of his writings: "The Problem of Subject Matter," 1944-1945 (a topic that also concerned the influential painter-in-exile, Hans Hofmann); "The Plasmic Image," 1945 (Newman's term for plasticity); "Northwest Coast Indian Painting," 1946; "The Ideographic Picture," 1947 (concerning the meaningful non-verbal character of a symbol); "The Sublime is Now," written in 1948, the year Newman came upon the germ of the idea for his mature painting: birth-in-death, at-one-ment, expressed through a thin line, or "zip," cleaving an otherwise unbroken space. As Richard Shiff observes, Newman "used his writing to instruct himself in the issues that he knew he had to master." Linking modernity to archaic content – indeed making the modern a function of the archaic – was a Nietszchean challenge that Newman gladly took up.

Newman's achievement, then, was to employ a discretionary visual intelligence toward radical expression, specifically, managing to achieve the sheer scale of color without loss of passionate force. (Imagine, if you will, Matisse's *Red Studio*, the cadmium red laced with indications of the white canvas; now imagine the cadmium red expanse almost uninterrupted.)

Newman's importance may be further measured in the turf wars his art and polemic inspired in subsequent generations of artists. His uncompromising example continues to chasten art-making decades after his death in 1970. Donald Judd, whose famous white paper, "Specific Objects," 1965, emphasized the perceptual aspects of Newman while ignoring Newman's spiritualized content, provided the world with a strong misreading of Newman's uniform, or "non-relational," compositions. This was advantageous to Judd's own modular industrial sculptures even as it reinforced Greenberg's bias toward formal essentials. For an alternative response to the art of perception, however, Robert Irwin, James Turrell and other West Coast artists, have created bodies of work at once more technological and more ethereal.

Newman's legacy to Turrell is indirect and diffused through Ad Reinhardt and others. (A fine, definitive retrospective of Ad Reinhardt's introspectively optical painting could be seen at the Museum of Modern Art, June 1-September 2, 1991.) Nevertheless, both Newman and Turrell presuppose certain notions of aesthetics: that, for instance, art centers not on beauty (nor ugliness), since art's aesthetic basis lies elsewhere: for Newman it lies in amazement toward abstract ideas engendered through form, for Turrell, in consciousness of perception. With Newman, the

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means are dramatic, a virtual wall of vivid color broken only by a vertical disturbance running through it; for Turrell, the means may be sharp or subtle to the point of being perceptually subliminal, an irradiating light inducing phenomenological experience of walls and rooms. Both artists hope to induce a markedly subjective response to fields of brilliant color or to dim light.

To accomplish this, Turrell typically prepares a light chamber into which the viewer enters to see the work. Promoted as much by the New York School as by West Coast "holistic" uses of light, manipulating a total visual field – the phenomenon perceptual psychologists call Ganzfeld – is an approach to concentration that artists who came of age in the 1960s have taken for granted and have tried to perfect. The dark visual environment within the Rothko Chapel is, by virtue of unruly natural light and shadow or steady gloom, only partially effective as a meditative chamber; but Turrell's sustained artificial control over light results in a predictable immersion of the viewer in the subjective and physiological aspects of seeing. Staring hard into dim space and perceiving only the blue streaks of one's own neurons firing within the disorienting weightlessness induced by a specially sealed, raked approach by ramp, can result in somatic effects as intense as the retinal experience is subtle.

The question remains whether all this is art or an especially ethereal form of "special effects." Dr. Edward Wortz, the scientist with whom Turrell and Irwin collaborated in the late 1960s while they were members of the Art & Technology experiment, considered these projects art. Turrell's Skyspaces incorporating the temporal spectrum of night are less scientific than poetically framed natural observations. Turrell himself insists he has taken pains to avoid spectacle. Both in his long-term diligent studies in perceptual psychology and in his secreted and modest application of technology, he has, indeed, acquitted himself: the sensory aura of his installations is almost always more potent than is one's curiosity about how the aura is produced. Turrell's installations, together with Irwin's light objects, initially coincident with the trendy interest in Op art, have decidedly surpassed Op and other glib misconstruals of pure visibility.

From the viewpoint of contemporary art history, however, Turrell's poetically framed nature has often been judged as scientistic, although they are non-materialist and interiorized.

In 1966, the year Turrell sealed a room to create his first documented light piece, Newman himself told Andrew Hudson of *The Washington Post*:

> The scale of a painting in the end depends on the artist's sense

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> of space, and the more one succeeds in separating the painting from the sense of environment. People always keep talking about the "environmental art." I hope my work is free from the environment.
>
> That is why in my mind's eye I have always been fascinated by the tundra, where the feeling of space involves all four horizons. That is why I have described my idea of space by calling it the "space dome." After all, when you are driving through the mountains you feel the environment. You feel locked in. You are where you are, and the mountains which create the environment give you the impression of no space at all.

Noting the perceptual flattening seen from within a vast yet imprisoning space, it would seem that Newman had predicted Turrell's experiments – most uncannily, his recent Roden Crater Project, near Flagstaff, Arizona, where embedded chambers are intended to enhance nature's volcanic amphitheater, its sky dome and astronomical spectacle.

Fashioning such a geologic prospect from which to gaze at nature recalls the early romantic impulse to fuse art and science which had similarly problematic results, and a mixed response. Wordsworth's call for the poet to ready himself for "carrying sensation [feeling] into the midst of the objects of science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will give us proper objects . . . " did not get rave reviews all around. Newman's seeing nature from inside out stopped short of coopting it as "creative." His own canvases argue for the felt, symbolic recreation of nature as integral to artistic experience.

As Adcock puts it, the light induced by Turrell "has epiphanic intensity, but no symbolism. . . ." If art is involved, it is in the finesse of orchestrating a directedness of attention so far as "the simple act of looking [is] highly compelling." Disallowing spectacular effects and novelty, there is, as well, ingenuity required to make people remain visually vigilant once habituated to the ambient light and space. Even if Newman would resist Turrell's manipulation of space as art, he could admit they share many assumptions of art's relation to human behavior.

During World War II, skywatchers trained to scan for enemy planes succumbed to the wearying and hallucinatory effects of habituation well before the crucial need for vigilance came to an end. Artists after the War attempting to prolong this sense of crisis met with resistance and ridicule in prosperous times. What we are witnessing in the legacy of Newman is that passage from existential to phenomenological consciousness which assumes that the human viewer is responsible for bringing meaning to seeing – and for sustaining that effort.

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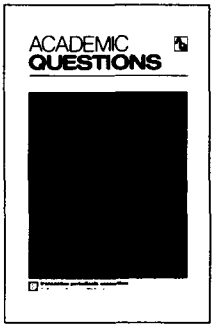

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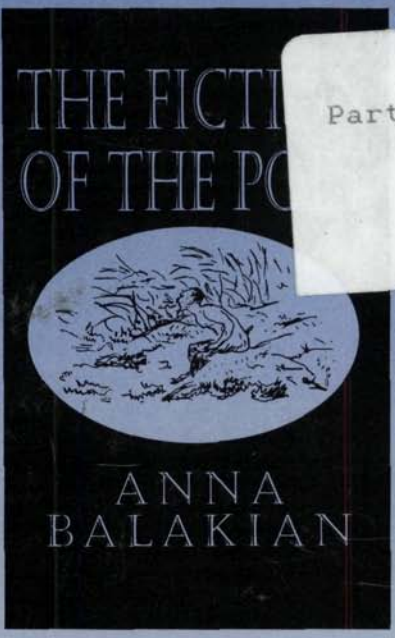

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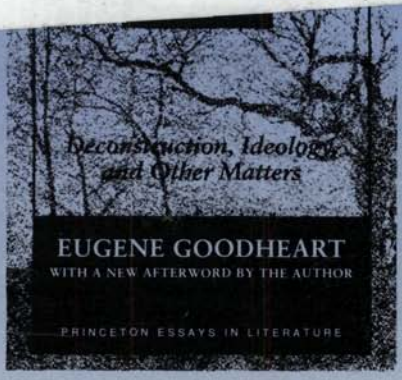
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